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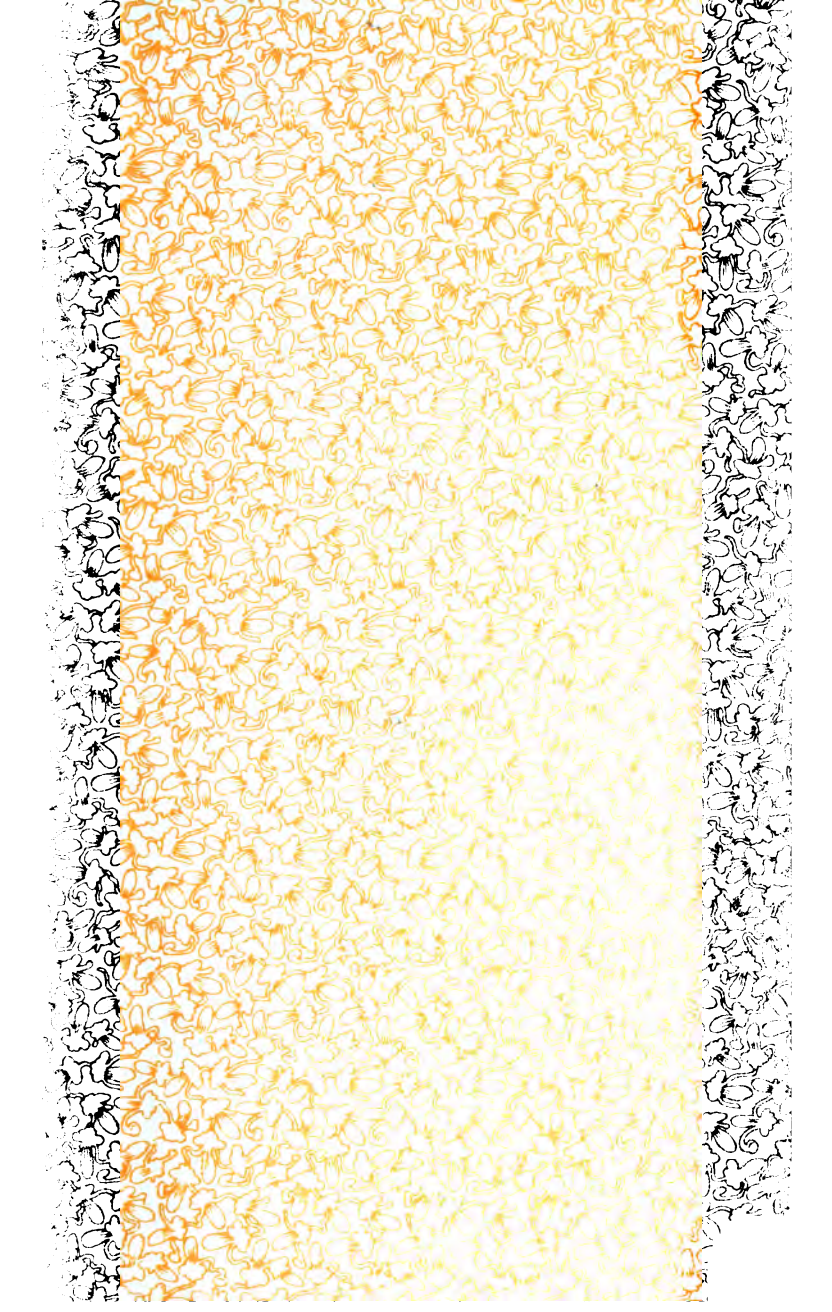
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ANTONIA

BY

GEORGE SAND

Univ. of California

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN
AND COMPANY

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Dedication.

TO M. EDOUARD RODRIGUES, the father of the fatherless, and friend of the friendless; who does good for its own sake, with the same simplicity, the same freedom and readiness, with which he interprets Mozart and Beethoven.

GEORGE SAND.

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"On the next night they met in the groves of the garden."

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ANTONIA.

I.

IT was the month of April, in the year 1785, in Paris; the spring that year was a genuine spring. The gardens were in holiday dress, the grass was enamelled with daisies, the birds were singing, and the lilacs were growing in such profusion near Julien's window, that their full-blown thyrsi bent over into his very room, and scattered their little flowerets over the great white squares of the floor of his studio.

Julien Thierry was a flower-painter, like his father, André Thierry, who had been very famous in the time of Louis XV. as a decorator of friezes, panels of dining-rooms, and ceilings of boudoirs. In his skilful hands these graceful ornaments became real works of art; so much so, indeed, that he ceased to be an artisan, and gained a great reputation as an artist; he was highly esteemed by persons of taste, his work commanded great prices, and he was a person of consideration in society. Julien, his pupil, devoted himself to painting upon canvas. In his generation, the light and charming decorations in the Pompadour style had ceased to be fashionable. The severer taste of the Louis XVI. era no longer scattered flowers over ceilings and walls, it framed them. Julien, therefore, painted flowers, fruits, pearl-shells, brilliant butterflies, green lizards, and drops of dew, in the manner of Mignon. He had a great deal of talent, he was handsome, he was twenty-four years old, and his father had left him nothing but debts.

The widow of André Thierry was with Julien, in this studio where he was at work, and where the bunches of

lilac were being despoiled by the caresses of the warm breeze. Although a woman of sixty, she was well preserved: her eyes were still beautiful; her hair was almost black, and her hands were delicate. Small, slender, fair, and dressed with exquisite neatness, although with extreme simplicity, she was knitting, and every now and then looked up at her son, absorbed in studying a rose.

"Julien," she said, "why is it that you do not sing any longer at your work? You might, perhaps, persuade the nightingale to let us hear its voice."

"Listen, mother, he is beginning now of his own accord," replied Julien; "he does not require a leader."

In fact, the nightingale, for the first time in the year, began at this very moment to pour forth his pure and resounding notes.

"Ah! it is really singing!" cried Madam Thierry. "A year has gone by. Do you see it, Julien?" she added, as the young man, interrupting his work, gazed into the thick grove before the window.

"I thought that I saw her," he replied, with a sigh; "but I was mistaken."

He returned to his easel. His mother looked at him anxiously, but asked no further questions.

"It is the same thing," she continued, after a pause, "you have a beautiful voice also, and I love to hear the pretty songs that your poor father sang so well — only a year ago, at this time!"

"Yes," said Julien, "you want me to sing his songs, and then you weep. No, I will not sing them."

"I will not shed a tear, I promise you! Sing me something gay, and I will laugh — as if he were here."

"No, do not ask me, mother! It pains me as well as you to hear those songs. Give me a little time. Let all come about gently. Do not let us do violence to our sorrow."

"Julien, you must not talk of sorrow any longer," said the mother firmly, although in an agitated voice. "I was weak at first, but you will pardon me! It was no light blow to lose forty years of happiness in a single day! But I should have remembered that your loss was

greater than mine, for you remain to me; — while I — I am good for nothing excepting to love you."

"And what more do I require?" said Julien, kneeling at his mother's side. "I know that you love me as no one ever will love me. And do not say that you have been weak. You have buried your sorrows in your own heart as well as you could; I have seen and understood all your struggles, and I thank you for them, my poor mother! You have given me strength, and I have needed your support, for I have had to suffer for you as well as myself. Your courage gave me faith that God would perform a miracle in my favor; that He would preserve your health and life in spite of the most cruel trials; and He has granted me this reward. You do not feel ill now, do you, mother?"

"No, my child, I am really well! You are right in thinking that God will sustain those who are true to themselves; that He will give strength to those who pray for it with their whole hearts. Do not think that I am wretched! I have wept a great deal, — how could I do otherwise? He was so good, so amiable, so happy! It seemed as if he had still many years to live. God decreed otherwise. For my part, I have had so much happiness in my life, that I had really no right to expect anything more. And God was merciful, even while afflicting me, for He has left me the best, the most beloved of sons! What right have I, then, to weep, and pray for death? No, no; I will rejoin your good father when my hour comes, and when we meet he will say, 'You have done well to live, to linger in yonder lower world, for the sake of our well-beloved child.'"

"You see, then," said Julien, embracing his mother, "that we are neither of us unhappy any longer, and that it is not necessary for me to sing for our amusement. We can think of *him* without bitterness; we can cherish each other without selfishness."

Madam Thierry folded her son to her heart for a moment, and they resumed their different occupations.

This scene occurred in an old pavilion, dating back to the reign of Louis XIII., that stood at the end of the

rue de Babylone. The most modern building on this street, and the one nearest to the pavilion, was a house now demolished, which was then called the hotel d'Estrelle.

At the same time that Julien and his mother were talking in the pavilion, two persons were chatting together in a pretty little saloon of the hotel d'Estrelle, — a fresh, cosy drawing-room decorated in the taste of the latter part of the reign of Louis XVI., — that is, a graceful, bastard Greek style, a little cold in the lines, but harmonious, and enriched with gilding on a white and pearl ground. The Countess d'Estrelle was dressed simply in a half-mourning gray silk; the Baroness d'Ancourt, her friend, was in demi-toilette, — a costume adapted for informal visits; that is to say, making a great display of muslins, ribbons, and laces.

"My dear friend," she said to the countess, "I do not understand you at all. You are twenty years old, beautiful as an angel, and yet you persist in living alone, like an insignificant bourgeoise. Your two years of mourning have expired, and every one knows you had no occasion to regret your husband; no man ever lived who so little deserved regret. He was considerate enough to leave you a fortune, and that really was the only sensible act of his life."

"Upon that point, dear baroness, you are utterly mistaken. The count left me a fortune, it is true, but it was encumbered with debts. Assured that I might liberate it in a few years by making certain sacrifices, and enduring certain privations, I accepted the inheritance without close examination; and now, after two years of uncertainty, — after endless explanations that I have never understood at all, — my new lawyer, — who is a very honest man, — assures me that I have been deceived, and am poor instead of being rich. It was upon this subject, my dear, that I was consulting with my lawyer this morning, in order to decide whether or not I can keep the hotel d'Estrelle."

"What! sell your hotel! Impossible, my dear! It would be a disgrace to the memory of your husband. His family would never allow it."

"They say they will not allow it; but they say also that they will not help me in any way. What do they expect, and what would you have me do?"

"They are a contemptible set, that family," cried the baroness; "but nothing would surprise me on the part of the old marquis and his bigot of a wife."

At this moment M. Marcel Thierry was announced.

"Show him in," said the countess; and, turning to the baroness, she added, "it is the person of whom I was just speaking, — my lawyer."

"In that case I will go."

"That is by no means necessary. He will only have a few words to say; and, since you know my position — "

"You will allow me to remain. I thank you with all my heart, for I am interested in all that concerns you."

The lawyer entered.

He was a fine-looking man, apparently forty years old, and unusually bald for that age; his face was frank, cheerful and serene, although he had a remarkably penetrating, and even scornful expression. His professional experiences had made him practical, and perhaps sceptical; but it was evident that they had not destroyed his ideal of integrity and honor; perhaps they had only made him the better able to appreciate and recognize that ideal.

"Ah, well, Monsieur Thierry," said the countess, pointing to a chair, "have you heard any news since morning, that you take the trouble to return?"

"Yes, madam," replied the lawyer; "M. the Marquis d'Estrelle has sent his business agent to me with an offer that I only await your permission to accept. He proposes to come to your assistance by relinquishing in your favor certain small pieces of property, not of sufficient value to cover the debts that harass you, but which will relieve you for the moment, and delay the sale of your hotel, by enabling you to pay something upon account to your creditors."

"Upon account! Is that all?" cried the baroness, indignantly. "Is that all the family d'Estrelle can do for the wife of a prodigal? It is perfectly infamous!"

"It is certainly not magnanimous," replied Marcel

Thierry, "but I have exerted my eloquence in vain, and so the matter stands. As Madam d'Estrelle has no fortune of her own, she is obliged, in order to retain a very moderate dowry, to submit to the conditions of a family who possess neither delicacy nor generosity."

"Say who possess neither heart nor honor," replied the baroness, rhetorically.

"Say nothing at all," said the countess, who spoke at last, after listening with resignation to all that had been said. "These people are what they are, and I am not the one to judge them, I who bear their name. We are strangers in all other respects, and I have no excuse for complaining, for it is I alone who am guilty."

"Guilty!" said the baroness, rolling back in her arm-chair in her surprise.

"Guilty!" repeated the lawyer, with a smile of incredulity.

"Yes," repeated Madam d'Estrelle, "I have committed one great fault in my life: I consented to marry a man to whom I felt an instinctive aversion. It was cowardly. I was a child, and was compelled to choose between a convent and a disagreeable husband. Afraid of the eternal seclusion of the cloister, I accepted instead the eternal humiliation of an uncongenial marriage. Like so many others, I thought that wealth would take the place of happiness. Happiness! I do not know, I have never known what it was. I was taught to believe that it consisted, above all things, in riding in a carriage, wearing diamonds, and having a box at the opera. I was bewildered, intoxicated, lulled to sleep with presents. I will not say that I was forced to give my hand, for it would not be true. Gratings, bars, bolts, the life-long prison of the convent awaited me, in case I had refused; but not the axe of the executioner; and, if I had been brave, I might have said *No*. We women have no courage, dear baroness, we may as well acknowledge it; we are not strong enough bravely to sacrifice ourselves; to hide the spring-time of our youth under the black veil; and yet it would be prouder, nobler, and perhaps sweeter to do this than to let ourselves fall into

the arms of the first stranger who is presented to us. I was cowardly then, vain, self-forgetful; I committed this error, this folly, this crime, in a word! It shall never be repeated, but I cannot forget that I deserve my punishment. Misled by a frivolous ambition, I threw my life away, and now I see how deceived I was; I am not even rich. I must sell my diamonds, and soon, perhaps, shall be forced to abandon the very house that bears my coat of arms. This is right, — I feel, I recognize the justice of my fate; I repent, but I do not wish to be pitied, and I shall accept without discussion the alms which the parents of my husband, in order to save his honor, choose to bestow upon me."

When Julie d'Estrelle paused, perfect silence prevailed, for her auditors were surprised and moved. She had taken no pains to conceal her grief. Weary of the discussion of her material interests, she seemed irresistibly impelled to pour forth her spiritual life, and seek the philosophical explanation of her position. The haughty Amelie d'Ancourt was shocked, rather than touched, by her confession, condemning, as it did, her own ideas and the habits of her class; she thought her friend imprudent, moreover, in speaking so freely in the presence of an insignificant lawyer.

As for the lawyer, he was really moved, but he had been accustomed to similar scenes. He knew how frequently people (even those in the highest rank) forget conventionalities when carried away by emotion, and he gave no expression to his sympathy.

"My beautiful client," he said to himself, "is a sweet and sincere woman, but she is right in blaming herself; when any one has resolved to say *no*, there is no human law that can force them to say *yes*. Like the rest of her class, she allowed herself to be betrayed into sin by a passion for shining toys, but she confesses her error sadly, and, in so far, is superior to most of her companions. It is not my duty to console her; I will confine myself to saving her — if that is possible."

"Madam," he said, after making these reflections, "your prospects are brighter now than they have been.

The marquis will not consent to make you independent, perhaps, but he will not let you suffer. The small present that he has just offered you is not the last; I have been given to understand this, and I am sure of what I say. Let his son's creditors threaten you again in the course of a few months, and he will again put his hand into his pocket, to prevent the sale of your hotel. Forget these bickerings, therefore; do not think of moving; trust to time and circumstances."

"That is all very well, monsieur," said the baroness, who was longing to put in her word and display her aristocratic pride. "Your advice is excellent, but if I were the countess I would not follow it. I would refuse outright these contemptible little charities! Yes, I would blush to accept them. I would go proudly to live in a convent, or, still better, with one of my friends, — the Baroness d'Ancourt, for instance, — and I would say to the marquis and marchioness, 'Arrange matters as you choose; sell my property. These debts are not of my contracting, and I shall not distress myself about the debts of your son. Pay them with the fragments of the fortune that he left me, and, if you dare, allow the world to behold the spectacle of my destitution.' That is what I would do, my dear Julie; the second marriage of the marquis has made him rich, and, I answer for it, that the fear of scandal would force him to pursue a different course."

"Will the Countess d'Estrelle follow this advice?" said the lawyer. "Shall I break off negotiations?"

"No," said the countess; "tell me at once what my father-in-law's present is; whatever it may be, I shall accept it."

"It consists," replied Marcel Thierry, "of a small farm in Beauvoisis, worth about twenty thousand francs, and a pavilion, old, but not dilapidated, situated in this street, at the end of the garden of your hotel."

"Ah, that old pavilion of Richelieu's era," said the countess, carelessly.

"A hovel," said the baroness; "good for nothing but to be torn down."

"That is possible," replied Thierry, "but the land is valuable; the street is being built up, and it can easily be sold for the site of a building."

"Do you think I would allow a building to be erected so near me," said Julie; "a house overlooking my garden, and almost my apartments?"

"You would have to require the house to turn its back to you; there need be no windows except on the street, or overlooking my uncle's garden."

"Who? Your uncle?" said the baroness, disdainfully.

"M. Marcel Thierry," said the countess, "is the near relative of my neighbor, the rich M. Antoine Thierry, whom you must certainly have heard spoken of."

"Ah, yes; an old merchant."

"Ship-owner," said Marcel; "he made his fortune in the colonies, without ever putting his foot into a vessel; thanks to his skilful calculations, and to fortunate circumstances, he has gained several millions by his fireside, as you may say."

"Present my compliments to him," replied the baroness. "And so he lives in this street?"

"His hotel fronts upon the new street, but there is only a wall between his garden and that of the Countess d'Estrelle; the pavilion is in a corner between the two estates. My uncle, I dare say, will be glad to purchase this pavilion; it will always be useful to him, whether he tears it down to make room for his garden, or turns it into a greenhouse or gardener's lodge."

"The rich M. Thierry then desires this pavilion," said the baroness; "perhaps he has already commissioned you—"

"He has given me no commission at all," replied Marcel, interrupting her, with dignity; "he knows nothing about the affairs of my other clients."

"You are his lawyer, then, also?"

"Naturally, madam; but that would not prevent me from asking the highest possible price, if the countess chooses to sell; nor would he owe me any grudge upon that account. He understands business too well not to

know the value of a piece of real estate that he wishes to own."

"But I have not yet decided to sell the pavilion," said the countess, starting from a vague reverie; "it does not trouble me in any way, and I understand that it is occupied by a very quiet and deserving person."

"Yes, madam," said Marcel, "but the rent is so small that it will add but little to your income. However, if you choose to keep it, it will be useful as security for one of your debts."

"We will see about it, M. Thierry. I will think the matter over, and you will give me your advice. How much is the property that the marquis has given me worth?"

"About thirty thousand francs."

"Ought I to thank him for it?"

"If I were you I would do nothing of the kind," cried the baroness.

"Thank him by all means," said the lawyer, in a low voice; "a word of gratitude, expressed with gentleness and resignation, can do no harm, and it will cost a heart like yours nothing."

The countess wrote a few lines, and gave them to Marcel.

"Let us hope," he said, rising, "that the Marquis d'Estrelle will be touched by your goodness."

"He is not a bad man," replied Julie, "but he is very old and very feeble, and his second wife governs him completely."

"That ex-Madam d'Orlande is a veritable pest," cried the baroness.

"You should not say anything against her, madam," replied Marcel; "she belongs to your world, and holds opinions which you accept as the law and the prophets."

"How so, Mr. Lawyer?"

"She detests new ideas, and regards the privileges of rank as the holy arc of tradition."

"Do not insult me by comparing me with that woman," said the baroness; "her ideas may be correct, but her

conduct is abominable. She is avaricious, and it is said would even betray her opinions for money."

"Oh, in that case," said Marcel, with a dubious smile, which Madame d'Aucourt considered an expression of homage, "I can understand that you, madam, must regard her with profound aversion."

He bowed and withdrew.

"That is quite a well-bred man!" said the baroness, noticing the dignity and ease with which he left the room. "Is his name Thierry?"

"Yes; and that also of his wealthy uncle, and of still another uncle, who had a far more desirable reputation: Thierry, the flower-painter."

"Ah! The painter? I came very near knowing that worthy Thierry myself. My husband received him in the morning."

"He was received by every one at all hours, my dear child, — at least by all persons of taste and mind; for he was a charming old man, perfectly well-bred, and remarkably agreeable."

"It seems, then, that the Baron d'Ancourt is not a person of mind and taste, for he would not invite him —"

"I did not say that the baron —"

"Oh, say so, say so, if you choose; it is the same thing to me; I have known him longer than you."

The baroness had a sovereign disdain for the intellect of her husband, but she pardoned his stupidity in consideration of his rank; and, with this two-edged reply, she burst into a fresh, joyous peal of laughter.

"Let us return to our conversation about these Thierrys," she said. "Were you acquainted with the artist?"

"No, I did not have that pleasure. You know that the Count d'Estrelle was taken ill soon after our marriage, and I accompanied him to the baths; he sank into a rapid decline, and the end of the matter was that I did not see any one."

"No wonder that you know nothing about the world, since you have never caught even a glimpse of it. Poor little thing! After sacrificing yourself to make a brilliant marriage, what a life you have led! Nursing a

dying man, wearing mourning, and the bother of business. We must put a stop to this sort of thing, dear Julie; you must marry again!"

"Ah, Heaven forbid!" cried the countess.

"You don't propose to live alone, and bury yourself alive, at your age? Impossible!"

"I cannot tell you what I propose to do, for I really do not know. My life has been so different from that of most young women, to whom marriage brings wealth and liberty, that I do not know my own tastes. I know, however, that I was miserable during the two years of my married life, and that I should be happier in my present position than ever before, were it not for these pecuniary embarrassments, which annoy me exceedingly, although I try to endure them without bitterness. My mind is not brilliant, and my character, perhaps, lacks the necessary elasticity to enable me to rebound from misfortune. Obliged to occupy myself to pass away the time, I have acquired a taste for serious amusements. I read a great deal, draw a little, study music, and write letters to my old convent friends. I am acquainted with a few quiet, but excellent people, who are my only visitors, and my life is calm and well regulated. I am not unhappy, and do not suffer from ennui, and that is saying a great deal for a person who at one time was always weeping or yawning. Do not, therefore, my dear friend, seek to disturb the placid monotony of my existence. Come and see me when you can, without interfering with your pleasures; but do not feel anxious about me, for I am really very comfortable."

"That is all very well for the moment, my dear. You show yourself to be a woman of character, by meeting bad fortune courageously. But there is a time for everything; you must not forget the advantages that youth and beauty procure, and allow them to escape you. Your family,—you will excuse me for saying so,—was not very good; but you derived a distinguished name, at least, from your melancholy marriage, and a title that elevates you in the consideration of the world. You are a widow, and therefore independent; you have no children, and therefore

retain all the charm of your youth. You have no fortune of your own; but, as your dowry is incumbered with debts, you can very well afford to renounce it and seek a better match than your first one. Trust yourself to me, and I will find you a suitable husband; I will agree to arrange the sort of marriage that you have a perfect right to look forward to."

"The sort of marriage! What do you mean? I do not understand you."

"I mean that you are too charming not to be married for love."

"All very well; but I—, shall I be able to love the person to whom you refer?"

"Why not; if he is really a man of wealth, and, above all, of good family — it would be unpardonable in you to marry below your present rank — instead of being a spendthrift and a fool? I will take care to select such a person, and, moreover a man of honor, with experience, knowledge of the world, and cultivated tastes; what can you ask more? You will not require, I presume, a youthful Adonis, — a hero of romance! Such brilliant personages are not often to be met with; and, when we do see them, they are the last ones, as a usual thing, inclined to select a bride for her beautiful eyes. Every one, in this age, is more or less embarrassed."

"I understand you," replied Madam d'Estrelle, with a sad smile; "you would like me to marry some worthy old gentleman whom you know and esteem, — for I don't suppose you would ask me to accept a monster. Thanks, my dear baroness, but I do not intend to hire myself out again to a sick man for large fees, and, in plain terms, this is what you want me to do. If my father were alive, I would devote myself to him joyfully; I would tend and nurse an aged friend without repining, but never again will I submit to be the slave of an infirm and morose tyrant. I fulfilled my sad duties to M. d'Estrelle conscientiously, and every one gave me credit for my conduct, but I shall not resign my present freedom. Although my parents are no longer living, I have a few friends, and am contented in their society. I ask nothing more, and I beg

you, most earnestly, not to try and make me happy according to an idea of happiness which I do not share. You are still, my friend, what I was at sixteen years old, when I married. Retaining the illusions that had been instilled into me, — imagining that people cannot live without wealth and display, — you are younger than I. So much the better for you, since you have married a man who allows you to gratify all your tastes. You ask nothing more — is it not so? For my part I am more exacting. I desire to love. You laugh! Oh yes! I know your theories! 'The honey-moon is short'; you have told me so a hundred times; 'the golden moon is the only one that never fades.' Very well; if this is so, I am so foolish as to say that I still wish to love and to believe; — if only for a single day, the first day of my marriage! Without this, I know by experience that marriage is a shame and a martyrdom."

"If you feel so," said the baroness, rising, "I will leave you, my sweet creature, to your reveries, and humbly beg your pardon for having interrupted them."

She went away very much wounded; for, although frivolous, she was not without penetration; and she felt that the gentle Julie, in this flash of rebellion, had spoken the truth. However, she was not vindictive, and after an hour had forgotten her anger. She even felt a little sad; and at moments was ready to say, —

"Julie is right, perhaps."

As for Julie, her courage abandoned her as soon as she was left alone; her pride melted into tears. She was only strong in moments of nervous excitement, under the stimulus, perhaps, of a more intense longing for affection than she acknowledged to herself. She was naturally gentle, and even timorous. She knew that the baroness had a good heart, and did not fear a rupture with her; but she said in her turn, —

"Amelie is right, perhaps! I am asking an impossibility; the advantages of wealth and rank, and love as well! Who obtains them all? No one in my position! While longing for the highest happiness, I shall, perhaps,

lose everything ; — condemn myself to the worst fate of all, — isolation and melancholy."

She took her parasol, — one of those old-fashioned, white, flat parasols, that produced a much prettier effect in green groves than our modern mushrooms, — and wandered pensively into her garden. The heels of her little slippers patted the green turf, her dress was tucked up gracefully over her straight under-skirt ; she wandered amid the lilacs, breathing the spring air with a silent agony, trembling at the voice of the nightingale, thinking of no one, and yet carried beyond herself by an immense yearning.

From lilac-bed to lilac-bed she walked slowly on, until she approached the pavilion, where Julien Thierry, the son of the painter, the nephew of the rich man, and the cousin of the lawyer, whom the reader already knows, had been at work an hour before. Madam d'Estrelle's garden was unusually large and beautiful for a garden in Paris ; the vegetation was rich, and it was laid out with great taste. Every day she walked through it several times, lingering amid the groves, and gazing sadly but tenderly upon the flowers with which the turf was sown. She did not turn aside on approaching the Louis XIII. pavilion, or feel any anxiety about being observed, — for this pavilion had been unoccupied for a long time. Julien and his mother had been living there only for a month. Madame d'Estrelle had complained to Marcel Thierry that her father-in-law, rather than lose the rent of such a small building, had let it to strange tenants. Marcel informed her that the new occupant was the widow of his uncle, the artist, — a most worthy and respectable woman, — and she had been completely reassured by this intelligence. He did not mention Julien. The countess did not know, perhaps, that the painter had had a son. At all events, she had not thought of inquiring about him. She had never seen him at the windows, for two reasons : in the first place she was near-sighted, and the young women of that period did not use eye-glasses ; in the second place, Julien, knowing that he was in the neighborhood of a person of austere manners, had taken great

pains to keep out of sight. At the windows of the upper story Madam d'Estrelle had sometimes noticed a lady with a noble and delicate face, framed in a white cap, who had bowed to her with polite reserve. She had returned the salutation of the peaceful widow frankly and respectfully, but they had never exchanged a word.

To-day the windows on the ground-floor were half-open, and Julie, seeing this, asked herself, for the first time, why she had never entered into friendly relations with Madam Thierry. She looked at the front of the little building, and saw that the door opening into the bottom of her garden was locked without, as it had been before the pavilion was occupied. Madam Thierry had but a poor prospect; the hotel, and greater part of the lawn, were in a great measure concealed by the grove in front of the pavillion. She had not even the right to seat herself in the sun, by the wall of her own house, at the foot of the flowering shrubs that grew there, or to pluck the flowers that thrust themselves into her very apartment. She was forbidden, in the strongest terms, by the conditions of her lease, from taking a step in the garden. In brief, the door was fastened, and the tenant had never petitioned to have it opened.

In point of fact, the countess had expected some such request, and had intended to comply with it; but she did not reflect that a feeling of timidity or pride might prevent Madam Thierry from applying to her. She thought of this to-day, — on this day of self-examination, — and reproached herself for not anticipating the natural desire of the poor widow.

"If some great lady in distress had been in her place," she thought, "I should not have forgotten the consideration due to age and misfortune. This is another proof of what I have so often told the baroness; our minds are perverted, and our hearts hardened by the aristocratic prejudices in which we are educated. I have been selfish and impolite in my conduct to this lady, who is said to be infinitely respectable, and who is very poor. How could I have been so forgetful? Now, however, I have an op-

portunity of repairing my neglect, and I will not lose it, for I need, to-day, to be reconciled to myself."

The countess approached the window resolutely, and coughed two or three times, to give intimation of her presence. No one moved, and she ventured to tap upon the ground-glass window-pane.

Julien had gone out, but Madam Thierry was still in the studio. Surprised, she came forward; and, when she saw this beautiful lady, whom she knew very well by sight, but to whom she had never yet spoken, she threw the window wide open.

"Pardon me, madam," said the countess, "for introducing myself to you in such an informal way; I am still in half-mourning, as you see; I am not yet making visits, and, with your permission, I have something to say to you. Can you, without ceremony, grant me a moment's interview?"

"Certainly, madam, and with a great deal of pleasure," replied Madam Thierry, with cheerful dignity and ease; not at all in the manner of a petty bourgeoise, dazzled by the advances of a great lady.

The countess was struck by the refinement of her face, the good taste of her dress, her sweet voice, and the sort of perfume of elegance that seemed to exhale from her whole person.

"You must sit down," she said; "I do not want to keep you standing."

"But you, madam?" said the widow, smiling. "Ah! An idea occurs to me. If you will allow me, I will hand you a chair."

"Oh, no, do not take so much trouble."

"It is no trouble at all! Here is a light cane-chair, and, both of us together —"

Both together, indeed, they passed the cane-chair over the window-sill, the one lifting it, the other receiving it, and both smiling at this familiar operation, which seemed to place them at once upon a footing of intimacy.

"This is what I wanted to say," said Madam d'Estrelle, sitting down; "hitherto, you have been living in a house belonging to the Marquis d'Estrelle, my father-in-law;

but, from to-day, you are living in my house. I do not yet know the conditions of your lease, but there is one of them, I presume, that you will be willing to modify."

"Will you be so good as to tell me which one, madam?" replied the widow, leaning slightly forward, while the fear of some annoyance cast a shadow over her face.

"It is this abominable door that offends me," replied the countess; "this locked, worm-eaten door that separates us. If you will allow me, I will have it opened to-morrow, and I sincerely trust that you will walk as much as you choose in my garden, whether for exercise or amusement. It will always give me pleasure to meet you there, and if you will sometimes stop and rest in my house, where you will find that I live very much alone, I will do what I can to make you like the neighborhood."

Madam Thierry's countenance had brightened. The offer of the countess gave her sincere pleasure. To see a beautiful garden at all hours, and be unable to enter it, is a sort of martyrdom. Besides, she was deeply touched by the grace of Madam d'Estrelle's invitation, and felt at once that she was in the presence of a thoroughly kind-hearted and amiable woman. Without losing the sweet dignity of her manner, she thanked her with grateful cordiality, and they began immediately to converse upon other subjects like old friends, so sudden and strong was their mutual sympathy.

"You live alone, I understand!" said Madam Thierry; "it must be a temporary arrangement;—you cannot like solitude."

"Not altogether; but I am afraid of the world, and have no confidence in myself. And you, madam, do you enjoy society?"

"I do not dislike it," said the widow. "I forsook the world for love, and forgot it; afterwards it sought me out, and I reëntered it without effort and without intoxication. Finally, I abandoned it again, out of necessity and without regret. All this seems a little obscure to you."

"I know that M. Thierry was very well off, that his standing was excellent, that he was courted in society,

and received the most cultivated and best people at his house."

"But you do not know about our previous life; it was a good deal talked about at the time; but that was long ago, and you are so young."

"Wait a moment," said the countess. "I ask your pardon for my forgetfulness. I remember, now; you were well-born?"

"Yes, I was Mademoiselle de Meuil, of a good family in Lorraine. I should have been rich also, if my marriage had not displeased my guardians. M. Thierry, who was then a poor artist without name or position, had won my heart, and I abandoned my family, parted from all my friends, abjured my rank, to become his wife. Gradually he became celebrated, and, after he had made a fortune of his own, I received my inheritance. We were well rewarded, therefore, for our constancy, not only by thirty years of love and happiness, but also by the prosperity of our old age."

"And yet, now —"

"Oh, now it is different! I am still happy, but in a different way. I have lost my well-beloved companion, and with him all that we possessed; but such great consolations remain to me."

Madam Thierry was about to speak of her son, when a valet in livery appeared, and informed the countess that her friend Madam des Morges was at her house.

"I will see you to-morrow," said Julie to Madam Thierry, as she rose; "we will talk together at our ease, either at your house or mine. I am eager to know all that concerns you, for I feel that I love you. Pardon me for saying this so abruptly, but it is the truth! My visitor is an old lady, and I cannot keep her waiting, but I shall order the workman to be sent to you to-morrow without fail, so that your prison may be opened."

Madam Thierry was enchanted with Madam d'Estrelle. Living, as she had done, in an atmosphere of enthusiasm, with the man she loved, and that man an artist, she had retained her life and spontaneity, and she was very romantic, as beseemed a woman who had sacrificed ambi-

tion to love. Her first impulse would have led her to relate what had occurred to her son, with enthusiasm; but he was out, and she took it into her head to make the most of the surprise that she had just enjoyed. Madam Thierry had given up all her luxuries when they lost their fortune, and Julien was often alarmed at the actual privations that she was compelled to endure.

At Sèvres, they had had a pretty little house, surrounded by a beautiful garden, where she had cultivated with her own hands the flowers that her husband and son used as models. They had been obliged to sell everything. Julien's heart was heavy when he saw the poor old lady shut up in Paris, in a small pavilion, for which they paid the most moderate rent. He had hoped at first that she would be able to enjoy the surrounding gardens, especially as the street was obstructed with masonry and the materials for new buildings; but the lease informed him that neither the Marquis d'Estrelle, their landlord, nor the rich Thierry, their near neighbor and near relative, would allow them to enter their grounds.

"He has complained bitterly about this closed door," said Madam Thierry to herself, as she thought of her son; "a dozen times he has been eager to go and beg the countess to have it opened for my benefit, promising that he himself would never cross the door of the pavilion. I would not allow him to do so, fearing that we might be mortified by a refusal. How glad he will be to know that she has invited me of her own accord! How shall I arrange matters so as to surprise him most agreeably? I must give him a commission to-morrow morning, that will keep him away while the workmen are busy."

She formed her plans, and just then Julien returned to dinner. The cane-chair was still without, leaning against the window-sill, and on the ground by this chair lay Madam d'Estrelle's white parasol; she had let it fall, and had forgotten it. Madam Thierry had gone into the kitchen to tell her servant, a great Normandy peasant-girl, to bring in the chair. She had not noticed the parasol. Julien, therefore, saw these two objects without knowing what had occurred. He guessed the truth in-

stantly; a sudden giddiness, a violent palpitation of the heart, seized him, and his mother found him so overcome, so agitated, so bewildered, that she was alarmed, thinking that some misfortune had occurred.

"What is the matter?" she cried, running up to him.

"Nothing, mother," replied Julien, struggling to overcome his emotion. "I came in quickly, I was very warm, and the cool air of the studio gave me a chill, — I am hungry. Come, let us go to dinner. You can explain at table the meaning of the visit you have just received.

He lifted in the chair, folded and unfolded the parasol, and held it a long time in his hand; he tried to seem indifferent, but his hands trembled, and he could not meet his mother's eye.

"*Mon Dieu!*" she said to herself, "can it be that his strange sadness for the last fifteen days, his unwillingness to sing, his stifled sighs, his abstracted manner, his sleeplessness and loss of appetite, are because? — but he does not even know her, he has scarcely seen her even from a distance. — Ah! my poor child, can it be possible?"

They went to dinner. Julien questioned his mother without embarrassment. She told him about the visit of the countess with a good deal of reserve, repressing the enthusiasm which, but for the discovery that she had just made, or the danger that she began to apprehend, would have made her eloquent upon the subject.

Julien felt that his mother was observing him, and was very guarded. He had never had a secret from her before; within the last few days he had had one, and the fear of alarming her taught him to dissimulate.

"Madam d'Estrelle's conduct," he said, "proves that she is a kind and sensible person. She feels — rather late, perhaps — the respect that she owes you. We ought to be grateful to her for her good heart. You told her, I presume, that I have too much knowledge of the world to consider myself included in the permission granted you."

"That is understood, as a matter of course. I did not even speak of you."

"So much the better! She does not know, probably,

that there is such a person; and, in order that she may not repent of her kindness, it will be as well, perhaps, if you never speak to her of your son."

"Why should I hesitate to speak of him? I will do so or not, as it may happen; — according to the chances of conversation."

"You expect to see her frequently, then? to go to her house, perhaps?"

"There is no sort of doubt that I shall meet her in the garden; whether I go to her house or not, will depend upon how long she continues to welcome me as she did to-day."

"Was she amiable?"

"Very amiable and very natural."

"Is she a person of mind?"

"I do not know; she seemed sensible."

"Any of the affectations of a great lady?"

"I did not see any."

"Is she young?"

"Why certainly."

"And pretty, they say?"

"Ah, indeed! Have you never seen her?"

"Only from a distance. These windows are always closed, and I have never happened to be in your room when she was passing our house."

"You know, however, that she passes here every day."

"You have just told me so. You must think me very curious about beautiful ladies and their walks. I am no longer a school-boy, my dear mother, I am a man; my mind has been matured by misfortunes."

"Has Marcel told you of any new misfortune?"

"On the contrary, uncle Antoine has agreed to be our security."

"Ah, at last! — And you did not tell me!"

"You were talking of something else."

"That interests you more."

"Yes, for the moment, I confess it freely. I am really glad to think that you will be able to walk, when you choose, in this garden. I shall not be able to accompany you and give you the support of my arm, since —

naturally — since I am not allowed to enter it; but I shall see you taking your walks, and you will return with a little color and a better appetite, I hope."

"Appetite! It is you who have no appetite! To-day, again, you have eaten scarcely anything, and you said that you were hungry. Where are you going?"

"To carry madam's parasol to the porter of the hotel d'Estrelle. It would be impolite not to return it immediately."

"You are right, but let Babel take it. It is useless for you to show yourself to the servants of the hotel. It might make some talk."

Madam Thierry took the parasol, and put it into the hands of the servant.

"Not like that," said Julien, taking it again. "Babel will tarnish the silk with her warm hands."

He wrapped the parasol up carefully in white paper, and gave it to Babel, not without regret, but without hesitation. He saw plainly his mother's anxiety, and tried to meet her eye without embarrassment.

Babel was gone ten minutes: longer than was necessary to make the circuit of the garden, enter the court of the hotel, and return. Finally she reappeared with the parasol, and a note from the countess.

"Madam, you will need a parasol, since you are going to be exposed to the sun. Be so good as to use mine; I want to deprive you of every excuse for not coming to visit your servant,

"JULIE D'ESTRELLE."

Madam Thierry was still looking at Julien, who, with as much composure as he could command, unrolled the paper in which he had wrapped the parasol. As soon, however, as her back was turned, he covered it with kisses, like a romantic and passionate child as he was, although he claimed to be a mature man. As for the poor mother, doubtful and troubled, she said to herself, sadly, that every pleasure in this world has its corres-

ponding danger, and that she might have cause to regret the amiable advances of her too enticing neighbor.

The next day, the door swung upon its hinges, the keys were placed in the hands of Madam Thierry, and, persuaded by Julien, she ventured into the flowering domains of the countess. The latter had promised herself to do the honors of her primroses and hyacinths in person, but she had received a visit from Marcel Thierry who gave her an unexpected piece of information, that changed the current of her ideas and somewhat chilled her zeal.

The lawyer called to talk to her about her affairs. She hastened to inform him that she had made the acquaintance of his aunt, of whom she spoke in the kindest manner possible.

"This amiable lady," she said, "told me about her family, her affection for her husband, and her past happiness; she was going to tell me about what she called her present happiness, when we were interrupted. I imagine, on the contrary, that she is very unhappy. Did you not tell me that she had been obliged to sell all that she had?"

"That is true," replied Marcel, "but she never lost her cheerfulness and courage. There is something in the character of my noble aunt that every one cannot understand, but which you, countess, can understand perfectly. I will relate, briefly, the history of herself and husband. My uncle, the artist, was a man with a noble heart, genius, and a brilliant intellect, but he was careless, and excessively imprudent. In his youth he was poor; day by day he earned, at first, the necessaries of life, and afterwards its luxuries. Gradually he allowed himself to be carried away by his natural temerity; and as he had rather princely tastes, — that is to say, the tastes of an artist, — he soon began to live in a very agreeable but very precarious way. He loved the world, he was admired in society; he did not visit on foot! He kept a carriage, he gave exquisite little dinners in his Sèvres cottage, as he called it: a beautiful house crowded with objects of luxury, and works of art, that cost a fortune; he lived so splendidly, in short, that he soon in-

volved himself in debt. His wife's fortune paid off past obligations, and allowed him to continue this hazardous but agreeable career. When he died, he had again accumulated a fine array of debts. My good aunt foresaw their approaching ruin, but was unwilling to sadden her husband's careless and frivolous old age by expressing the least anxiety about the future of her son. 'My son is a sensible young man,' she said; 'he is studying his art with enthusiasm, and has as much talent as his father. He will be poor, and will make his fortune. He will meet the trials that his father encountered with honor and courage, and will achieve the success that he achieved; knowing him as I do, I cannot fear that he will ever reproach me for having trusted in his good heart.' Her predictions were all fulfilled. When his father died, Julien Thierry discovered that he had left him nothing excepting debts; he set bravely to work to pay them off honorably, and, far from complaining, assured his mother that she had done well in never contradicting the best of fathers. For my part, I do not agree with him, I confess. The best of fathers is he who sacrifices his tastes and pleasures for the benefit of those who are to survive him. My uncle, the painter, was a great man; I ought rather to say a great child. Genius is a very beautiful gift; but devotion to those you love is still more noble, and (I shall have to say it in a whisper) it seems to me that the widow and son of my uncle are much greater than he. What is your opinion, madam?"

The countess had listened to Marcel very attentively, but with a dreamy expression.

"I agree with you, Monsieur Thierry," she answered, "and I admire these people with all my heart."

"But it seems to me," replied Marcel, "that my story has made you melancholy."

"Perhaps so; it has given me something to think about: I am very much struck, do you know, by the example that is given by certain lives! Madam Thierry, for instance, is like myself, — a widow, and ruined; and yet, even under these circumstances, she is happy, while I am far otherwise. She is proud to pay

the debts of a husband whom she tenderly loved; — and I —. But I will not refer again to the confession that escaped me in your presence yesterday. There is only one great question that I would like to ask you. Her son, — this excellent son of the worthy widow, — where is he?"

"In Paris, madam, where he is hard at work; his pictures, even now, are almost equal to his father's, and he is rapidly freeing himself from his embarrassments. He has influential friends who are interested in him, and who would assist him more effectually if he were less scrupulous and less proud; but with a little time he will make a fortune in his turn, He has reduced his debts to a very trifling sum, and uncle Antoine, — since he no longer runs any risk in doing so, — has agreed to become his security."

"This rich uncle, then, is as timid and economical as the marquis, my father-in-law."

"No, madam; his selfishness is very different from that of the marquis, but it would take me too long to tell you about it now. This is my hour for being at court."

"Ah, yes, Monsieur Thierry, another time. Hasten to fulfil your duties. Here are the deeds, ready signed; return soon."

"As soon as your affairs require it, madam; rely upon my punctuality."

"Do not be so ceremonious. Come without regard to business, whenever you have time. I owe you a great deal, Monsieur Thierry. You have not only given me a clear idea about my situation, which it was very necessary for me to have, — you have given me good advice also, and have not urged me to pursue a dishonorable course in order to serve my interests. I feel that you have some esteem for me, — a little friendship, perhaps, — and I thank you with all my heart."

The countess had a way of saying these simple things, that made them irresistible. Chaste and dignified in all her actions and in all her words, there was, nevertheless, a sort of agitation and tenderness in her manner that marked a heart too full, — a heart that is seeking to place

worthily its overflowing affections. The baroness would certainly have considered her too affectionate and too grateful to this insignificant lawyer, only too highly honored in being allowed to serve her. She would have told her that it is not right to spoil people of this description, by letting them see that they are necessary to you. Julie, sure of herself, and always modest and humble, was not at all afraid of degrading her friendship by bestowing it upon an honest and intelligent man. An insensible but rapid reaction was going on within her, as we have already seen, against the decrees and customs of the world in which she had hitherto lived.

"What an amiable woman!" Marcel Thierry said to himself, as he left her; "the devil take me, if I were not a lawyer, husband of the best woman in the world, and father of a grown lad, — excellent guarantees for the solidity of a man's character, — I should be in love with this countess! There is no doubt about it, — madly in love! I will tell my wife so this evening; she will laugh heartily at the idea."

"How was it," thought Madam d'Estrelle, at this moment, "that I should have failed to ask M. Thierry one thing, which it is important for me to know? I thought of it, and then forgot it. I shall have to inquire. If this young Thierry is living with his mother, it will not be proper for him to take his walks in my garden. After all, he may be a mere boy. Did Thierry say that he was a young man? His father was very old! Did he say that he was so old? I really cannot remember. Well, my people will know. Servants know everything."

She rang.

"Camille," she said to her *femme de chambre*, "has Madam Thierry, — the lady who lives in the old pavilion at the foot of the garden, and a very worthy person, — has she any children? I was talking to her yesterday, but I forgot to ask her."

"She has one son," replied Camille.

"How old, about?"

"He looks about twenty-five."

"He is married, I suppose?"

"No, madam."

"Where does he live?"

"In the pavilion, with his mother."

"Is he well-behaved? What is said of him?"

"He is very well-behaved, madam. Every one speaks well of these people. They are very poor, but they pay all their debts, and pay promptly. Moreover, they are not suspicious or mean. One would really think that they were well-born."

Camille was not seeking to flatter her mistress by speaking thus. She, also, had pretensions to good birth, and a reverse of fortune. She claimed to have had aldermen among her ancestors.

"*Mon Dieu!* Camille, birth is nothing," said the countess, who was often made impatient by the airs of her chambermaid.

"Pardon me, madam," replied Camille, offended, "I thought it was everything."

"Just as you please, my dear. Go and bring me my gray parasol. People nowadays, — one and all of them, — have so many affectations," thought Madam d'Estrelle, "that they will disgust me with all prejudices, and make me admire Jean Jacques Rousseau more than is reasonable. Really I have already begun to ask myself whether we aristocrats do not belong to the past, and whether our threadbare pretensions are not beginning to be good for nothing, except to amuse our valets."

She took her gray parasol with a feeling of vague annoyance, and sat down in her drawing-room, open to the April sun; she must no longer walk, she said to herself, in the direction of the pavilion, and perhaps ought to give up entirely going into her garden.

Just at this moment who should appear but Madam Thierry. Not meeting the countess, as she expected, she had ventured to come to her house, in order to express her gratitude. Madame d'Estrelle received her with great politeness; but the widow was too penetrating not to feel a certain coldness in her manner, and she was scarcely seated when she thanked her, and arose to go.

"Must you go so soon?" said the countess; "you find

me dull, I am sure, and I acknowledge that I feel a little embarrassed with you to-day. There is something weighing upon my mind that troubles me. Come, I will tell you at once what it is, and let us have done with it forever: you will pardon me. When I spoke to you yesterday I did not know that you had a son, — a very excellent young man, I am told, — living with you — "

"Let me say the rest, countess, you are afraid — "

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* I am afraid people will talk, that is all. I am young, alone in the world, bearing the name of a family who received me with regret, — I learned it only too late, — and who blame me for being unwilling to pass my widowhood in a convent."

"I know it, madam; my nephew, Marcel, has told me your history. I am as anxious to guard your reputation as you can be, and I will not allow your goodness to lead you too far. You must not come to the pavilion again while I am living there, and I must give up walking in your garden, and visiting you. This is all that I need say. It is not necessary to add that my son never dreamed, for a single moment, of considering himself included in the permission you so graciously granted me yesterday."

"Then it is all right," cried the countess; "the latter point is all that is necessary. I thank you for your delicacy in excusing me from returning your visits, but I shall agree to nothing more. You must walk in my garden, as we arranged, and you must visit me."

"I should be wiser, perhaps, to refuse your kindness."

"No, no," replied Julie, gayly; "you must come, — I insist upon it! If you refuse, I shall have to go in search of you, and tap at your window again, and that will be very compromising. Now we will see," she added, laughing, "whether you want me to be slandered for your sake. I warn you that I am capable of anything."

Madam Thierry could not resist the charm of her generous simplicity. She yielded, but not without promising herself, secretly, that she would fly to the other end

of Paris, if Julien's passion proved to be anything more than a dream of her maternal imagination.

"Now," said the countess, "let us regulate at once the conditions upon which we are to be neighbors, so as to do away with all fear of scandal. The pavilion has only four windows overlooking my garden. Two below, — I do not know the premises — "

"The two windows on the ground-floor are in my son's studio and my drawing-room. We are always there; but there is a frame in the lower sash of the windows containing four panes of ground-glass, and we only admit the air through the upper panes, which are often open at this season."

"Then you cannot see into my grounds, after all! Yesterday, however, the ground-glass panes were lifted; the window was half open."

"It is true, madam, one of the panes was broken, as you may have noticed."

"No, I do not see well, and for that reason I seldom observe closely."

"I opened the window yesterday, as an exceptional thing; early this morning it was repaired, and fastened as usual. It would interfere seriously with my son's painting to admit the light from below; and, in fact, he hangs a curtain of green linen before the ground-glass panes, to exclude it more effectually. He would have to mount upon a chair, therefore, for the express purpose, in order to look into your garden, and as my son is a serious man, and not at all an awkward school-boy — "

"Enough, enough! I am perfectly satisfied about the ground-floor. The windows above — "

"Are in my chamber. My son's room is upon the street."

"And does he never go into your room? Will you promise me that no one in my house shall ever see a man at your windows?"

"That has never happened, and never shall happen, I promise you."

"And he will never come to the door opening into the garden? You will tell him to be guarded?"

"Be perfectly at ease upon that point, madam. My son is a man of honor."

"I do not doubt it. Warn him not to call mine in question. And now say no more about it; that is to say, do not talk about me any longer; to forbid you to speak of him would be too cruel. I know that he is your pride and happiness, and I congratulate you upon having so good a son."

Madam Thierry had promised herself that she would not say a word about Julien, but it was impossible for her to keep her word. Reticent at first, she soon began to express her idolatry for this worshipped son, so well-beloved, and so well deserving her affection. The countess listened to the enumeration of the talents and virtues of the young artist without any misplaced delicacy. She became a little melancholy, however, when the idea occurred to her, that she, perhaps, would never have any children to occupy her youth and console her old age. Madam Thierry divined her thoughts, and spoke of something else.

And what was Julien doing while they were talking about him in the little summer drawing-room of the hotel d'Estrelle? He was at work, or pretending to be at work. He paused frequently; thought it too hot and then too cold, and trembled at the least sound. He said to himself that the countess might, by chance, be uttering his name at that very moment, that she was perhaps asking questions about him, out of politeness, and without listening to the reply. Finally he went to the window. The lower sash was really fastened, and covered with a piece of green linen, but in this linen there was an imperceptible flaw, in the ground-glass there was a transparent vein, and through this perfidious fissure, skilfully discovered and skilfully concealed, he saw Madam d'Estrelle every day wandering amid the groves of her garden, and strolling along the walk which, from the pavilion, was plainly visible. He knew to the moment at what hours she usually walked, and if, for any reason, she made her appearance unexpectedly, the mysterious presentiments, the thrilling intuitions that belong

only to love, and above all to a first love, warned him of her approach. At such moments he had a thousand excuses, each more ingenious than the last, for avoiding his mother's vigilant eye, and contemplating his beautiful neighbor; when everything else failed he went up stairs, pretending that he wanted something in his room, and going instead to his mother's room, — she remaining below, — gazed upon her through the blinds. In a word, he had adored Julie for the last fifteen days, and Julie did not know that he had ever seen her; and Madam Thierry was deceiving her without knowing it, when she declared that her son could not see her garden from his studio, and never looked from the windows of her chamber.

Julien was remarkably sensible in most respects, and there was something in the sudden passion that had taken possession of him that seemed even to himself almost insane, or at least inexplicable; but every effect has its cause, and it is our duty to seek the cause of his love, and not to admit that any human experience is altogether improbable.

It was a frequent custom with Marcel Thierry to spend part of the evening, — sometimes alone, and sometimes accompanied by his wife, — with his aunt. Julien and he loved each other tenderly, and, although they often disagreed, Marcel considering Julien too romantic, and Julien considering Marcel too practical, they would have died for each other. The lawyer liked to talk about his profession, in which he was rapidly gaining distinction. He amused Julien by giving him a description of his various clients. "There are some of my clients," he said, "whom I find it more honorable than profitable to serve, and these are precisely the ones whom I esteem the most highly." The Countess d'Estrelle he placed first in rank among these clients who brought him no lawsuits, but whose society he found agreeable or advantageous. He spoke of Madam d'Estrelle very often, and in enthusiastic terms, — he referred with the utmost contempt to the unworthy husband of this beautiful widow, he denounced bitterly the inhuman avarice of his family, expressed the highest admiration for Julie's sweet and

noble character, and involuntarily referred so often to her beauty and grace, that Julien felt curious to see her. As soon as his wish was gratified, he fell in love; he may have loved her unconsciously even before this.

Julien had never loved. He had lived simply and honorably; he had just experienced a great sorrow, and was in all the plenitude of his physical and moral development; his sensibility was stimulated by the courageous efforts that he had made, by the life he was leading with his mother, — a life made up of a continual exchange of tenderness between the two, — and by a disposition to enthusiasm that he had acquired in his long intercourse with an enthusiastic father. Since his father's death he had lived like a hermit; denying himself every amusement, and working desperately to preserve the honor of his name, and save his mother from distress. It was absolutely necessary that all these repressed emotions should find a vent; his generous heart was full to overflowing.

We shall say no more about it; we have spent too much time already in explaining an experience which people call impossible, and see every day; — an obstinate, violent, ungovernable passion for an object that is known to be unattainable. Long before this, la Fontaine had written these sensible lines, which have ever since been proverbial:

* Love, when we feel your magic spell,
To prudence straight we bid farewell.

* Amour, amour, quand tu nous tiens,
On peut bien dire: " Adieu prudence! "

II.

WHILE the countess was conversing with Madam Thierry, and while Julien was holding communion with himself, Marcel, not far off, was talking with his uncle, Antoine Thierry, the old bachelor, the ex-ship-owner, — the wealthy man of the family.

Kind reader, — as it was the fashion for authors to say at the time when our story occurred, — be so good as to follow us to the rue Blomet. Leave the hotel d'Estrelle in the rue de Babylone, walk for about five minutes around the wall of the garden, pass before the pavilion Louis XIII., follow the wall of another garden larger than that of Madam d'Estrelle, running along another road bordered with green turf, — but muddy and broken up in the middle, in preparation for the continuing of the city street, — turn to your left and enter another street bordered with green. You have now turned the corner of the rue Blomet, and are in front of a large house in the style of Louis XIV. This is the old hotel Melcy, now owned and occupied by M. Antoine Thierry. If M. Thierry would have allowed us to cross his immense enclosure, we could have gone from Julien's house straight across the nurseries of the garden to the back of the hotel. But uncle Antoine likes to be master of his dominions, and allows no privileges even to the widow and son of his brother. Marcel, therefore, when he left the countess, took the half-city, half-country walk that we have described, and finally entered the cabinet of the rich man, an old boudoir, crowded with shelves and etagéres covered with sacks of grain, specimens of fruit moulded in wax, and baskets filled with horticultural tools and instruments.

This cabinet is the chosen retreat of the proprietor. To get to it you must cross long galleries and immense saloons, loaded with gildings and projecting ornaments, blackened by neglect and humidity. The windows are always closed, the shutters are fastened; the rich man

passes no time in these magnificent apartments, he entertains no company, gives neither balls nor dinner-parties, loves no one, distrusts every one. All his tenderness he bestows upon rare flowers and exotic trees; he feels an esteem, also, for fruit-trees, and meditates incessantly upon the pruning and grafting of his subjects. He oversees and directs in person a score of gardeners; pays them well, and protects their families. Never talk to him about taking an interest in people who do not serve his caprices or flatter his vanity.

It was chance that first inspired him with his passion for gardening. One of the merchant-vessels trading upon his capital, and for his profit, with distant parts of the world, brought him a variety of seeds from China, specimens of which he allowed carelessly to fall into a vase filled with earth. The seeds germinated, a plant grew and put forth beautiful flowers. The ship-owner, who had not anticipated this result, and who never in his life had looked at a flower, took but little interest, at first, in the matter. But a botanist happened to call at his house (a second chance), and when this connoisseur saw the precious plant, he was enraptured, and declared that it was absolutely new, and unknown in science.

The life of M. Antoine was determined by this discovery. He had always disdained flowers: he will never, perhaps, understand them, for he is totally without artistic feeling; but his vanity, starving from the lack of nourishment, seized upon this windfall; he devoted himself to horticulture because it was his only way of becoming famous.

M. Antoine has a brother who paints flowers, who interprets them, cherishes them, gives them life. This brother is admired; a slight sketch from his hand is prized more highly than all the wealth of his elder brother. The elder brother knows this, and is jealous of his renown. He cannot hear art spoken of without shrugging his shoulders. He thinks the world foolish and unjust to be amused by such trifles, instead of admiring the force of character of a man who has had the ability to gain millions by his own exertions. He is sad, anxious. But

suddenly all this is changed: he will gain notoriety in his turn. The flowers that his brother paints upon canvas he will produce, — he will make them grow out of the earth; not common flowers, that every one knows and can name as soon as they see them; his flowers shall be rarities, — plants brought from the four quarters of the globe, — plants that botanists will have to rack their brains to define, classify, and christen. The most beautiful of all shall bear his name, — his own name! He has been upon the point of giving it to several of his favorites, but he is in no haste, for every year his collection is enriched by some wonder brought from afar. He can afford to wait, and he is waiting now for a certain lily to bloom, that promises to surpass all the others; and to which, if his expectations are fulfilled, he intends giving, in addition to its generic name, the specific name of *Antonia Thierrii.*

He has time enough, and to spare; for uncle Antoine, although sixty-five years old, is still hardy and robust. He is a short man, thin, and with quite a handsome face; he would be good-looking, but his hands, hardened by constant dabbling in the earth, his skin tanned by constant exposure to the wind, his neglected hair, dusty clothes, and back bent by physical labor, make him resemble a peasant. His manners are rude, his prejudices are obstinate, he has a hard, practical, and fault-finding mind, and uses incorrect, peremptory, and dogmatical language; so that, in the heart of Paris, and in a palace of which he is the careless and abstracted master, he presents the living image of a rustic boor. He never received any education; and, in regard to the refinements and elegancies of life, has remained absolutely stupid. Any reference to art or philosophy makes him almost furious. He has really a great deal of intellect, but it is exclusively concentrated upon practical calculations. Hence it is that he has grown rich; hence it is that he has become a horticultural hermit.

Marcel saluted his uncle abruptly, and without the slightest deference. He knows that courtesy will be thrown away upon uncle Antoine; that it is only by struggling

with him obstinately and rudely, if necessary, that the ex-ship-owner can be made to yield in anything whatever. He knows that his first impulse is always to say no, that no very probably will be his final answer, and that, to wring from him one poor affirmative out of a hundred negatives, he must be prepared to fight without fainting. Marcel is well-tempered (it is a family trait), and his professional habits of contention, and, above all, his habit of fighting with his uncle, make him find a sort of rude enjoyment in this occupation, by which an artist would be instantly repelled.

"Look here!" he opened the conversation by saying; "I have brought you something to sign."

"I shall sign nothing; my word is enough."

"Yes, for those who know you."

"Every one knows me."

"Almost every one; but I have got idiots to deal with. Come — sign, sign!"

"No, you might as well talk to a post! My word is as good as gold; so much the worse for those who doubt it."

"Then you want to see the house at Sèvres sold? Your brother's creditor will be delighted, no doubt, but he will have good cause, from this time, to doubt my word."

"It seems that you have a bad reputation."

"Apparently."

"You don't seem to mind it much!"

"What would you have? If I talk in a different way, you won't sign; I want to make you sign."

"Ah, you want it — and why?"

"Because I want to escape the annoyance and fatigue of returning to Sèvres, and waiting until the people there make up their minds to come and see you; not to speak of the derangement that this will be to my business. Sending this paper by my clerk will relieve all difficulties, and save me trouble and expense. Do you understand that?"

"You make me do whatever you choose," replied the ship-owner, taking his pen. He dipped it three or four

times into the ink without deciding, read and reread the deed making him responsible for six thousand livres in behalf of his brothers estate, — looked at Marcel, to see whether he was anxious or impatient, and, at the sight of his impassible face, renounced, with regret, the hope of putting him into a passion. Finally, he signed the deed, and threw it into his face, saying with an ill-natured laugh, —

"Go, beggar! You never enter my house except to get something out of me. You might have been their security yourself, — you are rich enough."

"If I were, the affair would have been settled long ago; you may be sure of that. I have not yet paid off my own obligations, and can no longer hide from Julien that what I have done for him has embarrassed me. He is troubled about it, his mother is grieved —"

"Oh! his mother, — his mother, —" said the rich man, with an expression of profound aversion.

"Every one knows that you dislike her, and she will never ask any favors from you, — you need not be afraid; but, with your permission, I love my aunt, and Julien worships her. He will pay the whole debt himself before two years are passed; if necessary, I will help him, and you, I flatter myself, will have nothing to disburse."

"I do not flatter myself with anything of the kind. However, I will render them this service, — but it shall be the last."

"And the first also, my dear uncle."

Marcel, by this time, had folded the deed and put it in his pocket; leaning his elbow upon the table, and looking his uncle straight in the face, he added, —

"Do you know, my good uncle, that you would have been a great brute if you had allowed your brother's country-house to be sold?"

"Ah! that is what you are coming to," cried M. Antoine, rising, and striking the table a blow that would have done credit to the fist of a peasant. "You want me to spend my money, gained by the sweat of my brow, in paying the debts of a spendthrift? When was it necessary for artists to have houses of their own, to fill them with

vain baubles more precious than the eyes in their heads; to have gardens with bridges and turrets, when they cannot raise a single lettuce? What is it to me, although my brother's folly is sold, and although his widow can no longer have first-rate cooks in her kitchen, and great lords at her table? They were very well pleased, no doubt, when they were entertaining counts and marquesses, and when madame could say, 'My house, my people, my servants!' I knew very well, for my part, what such extravagance would lead to. And look at them now, crying out for the help of the old rat, who, despising the world, disdaining luxury, and devoting himself to useful works, lives in his corner, like a wise man and a philosopher. They bow the head, they hold out the paw, and he who would not give out of pity, — such people do not deserve pity, — he gives out of pride. It is in this way that he revenges himself. Go! repeat that to your aunt, the beautiful princess in distress! Your brute of an uncle gives you this commission. — Off with you, dog of a lawyer! what do you mean by trying to stare me out of countenance?"

In fact, Marcel had fixed his small, gray, brilliant eyes upon his uncle's face, and was studying it as if he would have liked to read his very soul.

"Bah!" he said, rising suddenly; "you are a very hard man, a great brute, I repeat; but you are not so wicked as you pretend! You have some cause for hating your sister-in-law that no one knows anything about, and which you do not acknowledge, perhaps, to yourself. Now I intend to find out your secret, my dear uncle, you may be sure of that, for I shall make a special business of it; and when I set about a thing I am like you, — I never give it up."

Marcel continued to watch the rich man as he spoke, and he noticed a remarkable change in his expression. The coarse flush that had covered his face, burnt by the sun of the early spring, was succeeded by a sudden paleness. His lips trembled, he pulled his hat over his black, bushy brows, and, turning his back upon his nephew, went into the garden without a word.

Gardens imitating the sylvan style of Trianon, with artificial rocks, fantastic edifices, and miniature cows of coarse carthenware, lying on the green grass, were the rage at that time, but M. Antoine's was not of this description. Nor was it, like that of the hotel d'Estrelle, an undulating lawn, with winding walks, groves regularly planted, and broken columns reflected in limpid pools; one of the first picturesque attempts in the style of the modern English garden. Neither did it display the old-fashioned square beds and long regular borders of the time of Louis XIV. The ground was cut up and intersected according to the taste of M. Antoine. Everywhere you beheld baskets, hearts, stars, triangles, ovals, shields, trifoils, surrounded with green borders and with a labyrinth of little paths.

Flowers of every variety, — all beautiful or curious, — glittered in these strange beds, but they seemed to have lost all their natural grace. Imprisoned under bulrush cages, brass net-wire, reed parasols; protected and supported by props and stays of every description, preserving them from the stains of the earth, heat of the sun, and rude caresses of the wind, they no longer looked like themselves. His rose-bushes, cut and pruned every hour, were so clean and shining that they looked artificial. His peonies were as large and round as the tufts on a grenadier's cap, and his tulips glittered in the sun like tin-foil. Around the flower-garden stretched immense nurseries, poorly clad with foliage, and as melancholy as rows of pickets. This spectacle delighted the eyes of the horticulturist, and dissipated his melancholy.

There was only one agreeable walk in this immense enclosure, and that was in the corner of the garden next the pavilion occupied by Madam Thierry. There, for the last twenty years, M. Antoine had acclimated ornamental and exotic trees. These trees were already well grown, and cast a fine shade; but, as they no longer required careful and minute attention, he had ceased to feel the least interest in them, and greatly preferred the seed of a pine-tree or a newly-sprouted acacia.

His greenhouse was marvellously beautiful, and it was there that he hastened to bury the bitter memories that

Marcel had awakened. He walked through the department of his favorite plants, — lilies, — and, after assuring himself that those in bloom were in good condition, he paused before a little china vase, where an unknown bulb was beginning to put forth slender shoots of a dark and brilliant green.

"What will it be like?" he thought; "will it make an epoch in the history of horticulture, like so many plants that owe their renown to me? It is a long time since I have produced anything new in my establishment, and it seems to me that I am no longer talked about as much as I ought to be."

Marcel, in the meanwhile, went away absorbed in thought. There was one curious feature in the avarice of M. Antoine, and this was that he was not avaricious. He did not hoard up his money; he did not practise usury, and had never done so: he denied himself nothing that he took a fancy to, and sometimes, out of vanity, he did good. How was it that he had refused to purchase the property of his defunct brother for his nephew? This act of liberality would have caused him to be talked about more widely, and with more admiration, than the future *Antonia Thierrii.* Why had he allowed such a fine opportunity of gaining notoriety to escape him? This point Marcel sought in vain to explain. He knew that the shipowner had always been jealous of his brother; jealous, not of his talent, — for that he despised, — but of his celebrity, and the favor with which he was received in the fashionable world. But surely this jealousy must have died with the old André. Why should his widow and son reap the sad inheritance?

A thought occurred to Marcel: he turned back, followed M. Antoine to the greenhouse, and, interrupting his horticultural reveries, said, in a cheerful tone, —

"By the way, uncle, do you want to purchase the pavilion of the hotel d'Estrelle?"

"Imbecile! If the pavilion is for sale, why didn't you tell me?"

"I forgot it. Well then, how much will you give for it?"

"How much is it worth?"

"I have told you already. To the Countess d'Estrelle, who has just accepted the property, it is worth ten thousand francs; as you are anxious to get it, and are in want of it, it is worth double that to you. It remains to be seen whether the countess will not ask you three times as much."

"Of course! That is the way with your great ladies! They are sharper and meaner than the plebeians they despise."

"The Countess d'Estrelle despises no one."

"It is false! she is just as great a fool as any of them. She has lived at the hotel d'Estrelle four years, and, during all that time, although there is only a wall between us, has never had the curiosity to come and see my garden."

"Perhaps she don't know anything about rare plants."

"Say, rather, that she would consider herself disgraced if she set foot in the house of a plebeian."

"Ah! You want a young woman in mourning to compromise herself by coming to walk in your garden, — a bachelor of your age."

"My age! Are you joking? How could a man of my age be talked about?"

"There is no knowing! You were a volcano at one time."

"I! What are you talking about, animal?"

"You will never make me believe that you have never been in love."

"What do you say that for? Surely I have never been in love. I'm not such a fool."

"That is all false. You may call yourself a fool as much as you choose, but you have been in love, at least once! Deny it if you can," Marcel added, as he saw that the horticulturist was again becoming pale and agitated.

"Have done with this nonsense!" replied uncle Antoine, stamping on the ground with vexation. "You are the lawyer of Madam d'Estrelle; are you commissioned to sell the pavilion?"

"No, but I have a right to offer it! How much will you give for it?"

"Not a sou! Take yourself off, and leave me in peace."

"I am at liberty, then, to offer it to another purchaser?"

"What other?"

"There has been no applicant as yet. I have no taste for trickery, and will not betray your interests; but you know, as well as I do, that they are building up the street, and that, this evening or to-morrow morning, a dozen would-be purchasers may be quarrelling over the pavilion."

"If Madam d'Estrelle chooses to enter into negotiations with me —"

"You want to pay her a visit? That can easily be arranged."

"She will receive a visit from me?" said M. Antoine, his eyes lighting up for an instant.

"Why not?" said Marcel.

"Ah, yes! she will grant me an interview in her court, or, at the most, in her ante-chamber; — she will stand up between two doors and receive me, as she would a dog, — or a lawyer!"

"You think a great deal of good manners, then; you, who never take your hat off before any one, no matter who. But set your heart at rest. Madam d'Estrelle is as polite to deserving people of our class, as to the greatest aristocrats. The proof of this is, that she is on the best terms with my aunt Thierry; they are already almost friends."

"Ah! there is nothing strange in that, — your aunt is noble. The nobles, — bah! they understand each other like thieves in a fair."

"*Sapristi!* uncle, what have you now against your sister-in-law?"

"I have this against her — that I detest her!"

"I see that; but why?"

"Because she is noble. Don't talk to me about the nobility. They have no hearts, and they are all ungrateful!"

"You were in love with her, then!"

M. Antoine was completely overcome by this direct question. He grew first pale, and then purple, with rage; he swore, pulled his hair, and cried furiously, —

"She told you so — she pretends, she dares relate —"

"Nothing at all. I have never been able to make her say a word about you; but I have had my suspicions all along, — and now you acknowledge the truth. Tell me all about it, uncle, it will be worth your while, for the confession will relieve you; at least, once in your life, you will have yielded to a good impulse, and will be at peace with yourself."

A good half hour passed before the ex-ship-owner had poured forth all the spite and bitterness with which his heart was filled; he abused Marcel, Madam Thierry, and his defunct brother, with almost equal violence. Marcel teased him cruelly; but finally, when he had succeeded in exhausting him, he carried the day. Old Antoine related the following story by fits and starts, forcing the lawyer to draw from him by piecemeal the secret of his life, which was, at the same time, that of his character.

The elopement of Mademoiselle de Meuil and André Thierry occurred forty years before the opening of our story; after their flight, the lovers came to M. Antoine Thierry, who, although young, was already a rich man, to beg an asylum. Hitherto the brothers had been good friends. Mademoiselle de Meuil was secreted in the house of the ship-owner, and regarded him with sincere friendship and holy confidence. Pursued by the family de Meuil, and exposed to the danger of being sent to the Bastile, André was obliged to leave Paris so as to mislead his enemies; in the meanwhile powerful protectors, interested in his favor, endeavored to bring about a reconciliation, and finally succeeded in doing so.

The separation of the lovers lasted several months; and, during this period, Mademoiselle de Meuil, a prey to the most terrible anxiety, thought several times of returning to her relatives, so as to save her lover from the perils and misfortunes that threatened him. More than once she discussed her plans confidentially with brother André; she asked his advice, and did not hide

from him her grief and alarm. Thus appealed to, M. Antoine conceived a really whimsical idea; the plan that the poor man formed was suggested neither by treachery nor passion, but it very soon brought his morbid vanity into full play. But let him speak for himself:

"That girl," he said, "was lost, although she and my brother had never lived together as man and wife. She was too much compromised to be received again by her family, and could hope for nothing better than to be sent to end her days in a convent. My brother seemed to me in a still worse plight: they had obtained a *lettre de cachet* against him, which, at that time, was no joke. He might have been thrown into prison at any moment, and have lain there for twenty years, — how did I know? — perhaps for his whole life! The young lady was constantly telling me all this herself; every moment she cried, 'What shall we do, M. Antoine? *Mon Dieu!* what shall we do?' So then the idea occurred to me that I would save them both by marrying her. I was not in love with her. No! The devil take me if I am lying. She belonged to a good family, and that gave her a sort of distinction, — not in my eyes, for I have no prejudices, but in the opinion of other people, — and but for that she would not have been worth noticing. You laugh! What are you laughing at, ass of a lawyer?"

"I am not laughing," said Marcel. "Go on, — you told her your fine idea."

"Plainly and fairly; I was no more of a fool than my brother, and could express myself just as well. Pray was he an eagle in those days? He was an insignificant dauber, who had not had sense enough to lay up two sous, and who had no reputation at all. Was he more polite than I, — younger, — better bred? We had been brought up together, and he had but one advantage; I was five years his senior. As far as appearances are concerned, I was better looking than he; André never was handsome. He was a great babbler, and had always been so; I did not talk so much, but was more sensible. Brothers, born of the same parents, with the same blood flowing in our

veins, we were alike plebeians. In the meanwhile I had already made nearly a million that no one knew anything about! This gave me a good deal of power which my brother did not possess. With a million you can lull justice to sleep, pacify relatives, buy up protectors who will not fail you; you can even reach the ear of the king, and are quite good enough to marry a girl of a noble family with no dowry of her own. If people make an outcry, it is because they would like to have your million in their own pockets. Finally, my money proved, plainly enough, that it was not from any lack of mind or genius, that I was not such a fine talker as my brother. All this the young lady ought to have understood. I did not ask her to love me immediately, but to love her André well enough to forget him, and save him from being sent to rot in prison. Nothing of the kind! She behaved like a prude; instead of recognizing my good sense and generosity, she flew into a passion, called me rude, treated me like a bad brother and a dishonest man, and decamped from my house without telling me where she was going. Running all sorts of risks to avoid seeing me again, she departed; and, by way of thanks, left me a letter promising never to inform M. André of my treachery. I acknowledge that I have never pardoned her for that, and never will pardon her. As for my brother, his conduct in the affair offended me almost as much as that of madame. I had no idea of waiting until his haughty wife should betray me. As soon as he had escaped from his troubles, and married, I told him the whole story, as I have just told it to you. André was not angry; he thanked me, on the contrary, for my good intentions, but he began to laugh. You know how frivolous he was, — a weak head! Well, he thought my idea comical, and made fun of me. That put an end to our friendship forever; I would never consent to see either wife or husband again."

"Good!" said Marcel; "finally that mystery is solved. But Julien! — What grudge can you have against Julien? He was not born at the time of your grievances."

"I have no grudge against Julien, but he is the son of his mother, and I am sure that he hates me."

"Upon my honor, Julien knows nothing about the facts that you have just related; your conduct since his father's death is all that he knows about you. Do you think he can approve of that? Was it not your duty to purchase the house for his mother, when he swore, in the most solemn manner, that he would devote his life to paying you?"

"Fine security, the life of a painter! What became of his father, — and he was famous?"

"Even if you had lost fifty thousand francs or so, you who have more than — "

"Hold your tongue! The amount of a fortune should never be mentioned. When such words are spoken, the walls, the trees, the very flower-pots have ears."

"At any rate, you are rich enough to have purchased the house at Sèvres without inconvenience; you will acknowledge that?"

"Do you want to make me out a miser?"

"I know that you are not a miser, but I am forced to believe that you are wicked, and that you love to see those to whom you are hostile suffer."

"Well, have I not the right to do so? Since when have we been forbidden to revenge ourselves?"

"Since we have ceased to be savages."

"I am a savage, then!"

"Yes!"

"Go away, — you have worn out my patience! — Take care that I do not turn against you also!"

"I defy you to do so!"

"Why?"

"Because you know that I am the only person in the world who, in spite of all your perversities, feels a little affection and love for you."

"How discerning you are! You acknowledge that Julien detests me."

"Make him love you! then you will have two friends instead of one."

"Ah, of course! you want me to purchase the house.

Very well, when Julien becomes an orphan I will look after his interests, on condition that he never speaks to me of his mother."

"You would like him to kill her, perhaps? You are a fool, uncle; that is the long and the short of it. You are excessively vain, and you worship rank more than those who can boast of their ancestors. I am certain that you were not in love with Mademoiselle de Meuil; but she belonged to a good family, and for that reason you wanted to supplant your brother. You were furiously jealous of poor André, not because you loved a beautiful and noble woman, but because of the parchments which were her marriage portion, and the sort of glory reflected upon him by her affection. In a word, you do not hate the nobility; you worship them, you envy them, you would give all your millions to have been born noble. Your pretended fury against them is nothing but the spite of a disdained lover, as your hatred against my aunt is merely the malice of an obstinate and humiliated plebeian. This, my poor uncle, is your mania. We each of us have one, it is said, but this of yours makes you a bad man, and I am sorry for you."

The ex-ship-owner felt, perhaps, that Marcel was right; consequently he was prepared to work himself up into a more violent rage than ever; but Marcel shrugged his shoulders, turned his back upon him, and went away without paying the least attention to his invectives.

In his heart, Marcel was very glad to have got possession of his uncle's secret, — the clue to his thoughts and recollections. He promised himself that he would turn his discovery to good account, and, by means of it, would lead M. Antoine to amend. Will he succeed in this effort? The sequel must show.

"Madam," said Marcel to the Countess d'Estrelle, the next morning, "you must sell your pavilion."

"Why?" replied Julie. "It is so old, out of repair and is worth so little!"

"It has a relative value which you should not despise

My uncle will give you ten thousand francs for it, — perhaps more."

"This is the first time, my dear lawyer, that you have given me bad advice. I would never consent to take advantage of a neighbor. Would not that be speculating upon the need that he may have of this old building?"

"A little patience, my noble client! My uncle does not need the pavilion; he wants it: that, I assure you is a very different thing. He is rich enough to pay for his fancies. And what would you say if he thanked you for your demands?"

"How can that be?"

"Make his acquaintance, and he will offer you a consideration above the price."

"Fie, Monsieur Thierry! Would you have me pay court to his money?"

"Not at all; bestow a smile of patronizing goodness upon it, and it will fly to you of its own accord. Besides, you will be doing a good deed."

"How so?"

"Show my uncle that you feel an affection and esteem for my aunt and cousin, — your tenants, — and you will force the old man to help them effectually in their distress."

"I will do that with all my heart, Monsieur Thierry, and I already know your aunt well enough to appreciate her. But what can I say of your cousin, whom I do not know?"

"Do not hesitate upon that account. You can take him upon trust fearlessly. Julien has a noble heart, — a lofty mind, — a soul above his condition; he is the best of sons, the truest of friends, the most honest of men, and, moreover, the most reasonable of artists. You can say all that, countess, and if Julien ever gives the lie to your statements, I am willing to forfeit your confidence and esteem."

Marcel spoke with so much enthusiasm, that Julie was deeply impressed. She refrained from asking questions, but listened, without losing a word, to the conclusion

of his eulogy, and Marcel entered into details with which any one, not absolutely incapable of feeling, would have been touched. He told her of Julien's devotion to his mother, of the sufferings he had endured without her knowledge; how he even went without food in order that she might not be deprived of it. In making this statement, Marcel, like Madam Thierry on the preceding day, uttered a falsehood without knowing it. Julien did not eat, because he was in love; and Marcel, who was far from suspecting the truth, thought that he understood the cause of his involuntary austerity. But Julien was capable of doing a great deal more for his mother than restraining his appetite: he would have given the last drop of his blood for her; so that Marcel, although he did not state the exact truth in regard to a special fact, stated far less than the truth.

His panegyric upon Julien was so enthusiastic and heartfelt, that the countess had no excuse for hesitating. She begged Marcel to inform uncle Antoine that she was anxious to see his rare flowers, and to visit his immense and curious plantations. Uncle Antoine received this communication with an air of haughty scepticism.

"I understand all that," he said; "she wants a high price for the pavilion; she will make me pay the eyes out of my head for her politeness."

Marcel was not duped by his grumbling. The satisfaction of the rich man was too apparent.

On the appointed day, Madam d'Estrelle dressed herself once more in deep mourning, stepped into her carriage, and drove to the hotel Melcy. Marcel was standing at the door awaiting her. He offered her his hand, and, as they ascended the great front steps, uncle Antoine made his appearance in all his glory, in the dress of a gardener. Considering the folly of the old man, this really was not a bad idea. Without consulting Marcel, he had half resolved to array himself magnificently. He was rich enough to wear cloth of gold, if he desired it, but the fear of looking ridiculous restrained him. Since he prided himself, above everything else, upon being a great horti-

culturist, he had sense enough to appear before his distinguished visitor in a severely rustic costume.

In spite of his harsh character and habitually rude manners, — in spite of his secret desire to assert his independence and philosophical pride before Marcel, — he lost countenance altogether when the beautiful Julie saluted him graciously, and looked at him with her sweet, frank expression. For the first time in thirty years, perhaps, he took off his three-cornered hat, and, instead of replacing it immediately upon his head, held it awkwardly, but respectfully, under his arm, during the whole time that her visit lasted.

Julie was above the pettiness of trying to flatter his caprices, but she took a genuine interest in the horticultural wealth displayed to her. A flower herself, she loved flowers; and this is not a madrigal, to use the language of that epoch. There are natural affinities in all the creations of God, and in all times symbols have been the expression of a reality.

The rich man, although in himself not at all like a rose, felt his heart expand, nevertheless, at the sincere praise bestowed upon his cherished plants. In presence of the sylph who seemed to float over the turf without touching it, and who glided along the borders of his flower-beds like a caressing breeze, he gradually forgot his affected pride. With perfect resignation, he waited to learn the amount that she proposed to demand for the pavilion.

"By the way," said Marcel, who saw that Madam d'Estrelle had forgotten this affair, "tell the countess, my dear uncle, how anxious you are to purchase — "

"Yes, in fact," said the rich man, without allowing himself to be too much compromised, "I have had some idea of purchasing the pavilion of the hotel d'Estrelle; but at present, if madame regrets parting with it — "

"There is only one reason that makes me do so," replied Julie; "it is occupied by persons for whom I feel a great respect, and I do not wish to have them disturbed."

"They have a lease, I suppose?" said M. Thierry, who knew perfectly well how matters stood.

"Certainly," said Marcel; "and you will have to pay them a large indemnity if they consent to annul it, for they have just entered into possession."

"A large indemnity?" said uncle Antoine, frowning."

"I will willingly undertake that duty," said Madam d'Estrelle, if —"

"If I pay in proportion!"

"That is not what I intended to say," said Julie, in a tone of dignity that cut the discussion short. "I intended to say, that if Madam Thierry, your sister-in-law, is unwilling to leave her lodging, it is my intention to maintain her rights to the full enjoyment of her lease. I shall make this a condition of the sale, and no purchaser will be allowed to elude it under any pretext."

"Such a condition will delay the sale of the pavilion, and make it less advantageous to you, madame," said M. Antoine, who was longing to pronounce the sweet word *countess*, but who could not make up his mind to do so.

"That may be, Monsieur Thierry," replied Julie, in a tone of indifference which the rich man thought assumed, and very adroit.

"To come to the point," he said, after a moment's silence. "What will be the price demanded by—?"

Marcel was going to reply; but Julie, who certainly did not understand business, did not notice this, and answered, ingenuously, —

"Oh! as to that, I really don't know. Your reputation is that of an honest and just man; you can fix the price yourself."

Without paying any attention to the reproachful glance of her lawyer, she continued, —

"You cannot suppose, M. Thierry, that I came to visit your garden so as to drive a bargain with you about my little piece of property. I know that you would like to purchase it, and you know, probably, that my affairs are embarrassed; but this, surely, need not make

us unjust in our dealings with each other. The declaration that I have just made I shall abide by. I will not consent to have your sister-in-law annoyed upon any account, — not for a million, — for I love and honor her. Consider that point settled, therefore. As to the other matter, reflect upon it, and let me know your decision; for you owe me a visit now, my good neighbor, and I shall not excuse you from paying it, whether we conclude our present negotiations or not."

The countess retired, leaving the rich man dazzled by her sweetness and grace. Unable to conceal his satisfaction from Marcel, he tried to attribute it to some other cause than the true one.

"How now, lawyer?" he cried, with an air of triumph. "You are caught, and look foolish enough! What have you to say now about the demands of this lady? She is more sensible than you: she agrees to my valuation —"

"Enjoy her pretty ways, and praise her politeness, to your heart's content," replied Marcel; "but, at the same time, try to understand, and be equal to, the part she expects you to play."

"In fact you are right!" said Antoine, who was very acute in matters of business. "When a great lady says to a man like me, 'Do as you choose,' she means, 'Pay like a great lord!' Very well; by the life of me, I will pay dear! The countess shall see that I am not a miserly old pedant, like her father-in-law, the marquis! There is only one thing that surprises me in a woman that seems so sensible, and that is, the friendship that she feels for my sister-in-law. I don't exactly know whether she meant to be agreeable to me, or to vex me, by talking as she did."

"She meant to be agreeable to you."

"I suppose so, since she wants to make use of me. Still, my sister-in-law may have told her that I was a miser."

"My aunt has not spoken of you at all. Behave so that she will not have to complain about you."

"Let her complain, if she chooses! What harm

would it do me? Why should I care for the friendship and respect of this countess?"

"Why, indeed!" replied Marcel, taking his hat. "It 's evident enough how indifferent you are! But no matter; do your best to behave like a civilized being, and name the day for your visit, so that I may announce it."

Antoine appointed the day after the morrow, and they separated. On the very next day, without informing Marcel, he took indirect but skilful measures for repurchasing the house at Sèvres. Had he resolved to restore his father's house to his nephew, to confer so great a blessing upon his sister-in-law? Certainly not! No man in the world was more vindictive than M. Antoine, for he had never found a vent either for his good or bad passions, and repression had increased their violence. No influences in his narrow life had softened the asperities of his nature. But, at last, an impression was made upon him. Without affectation and without calculation, merely by unconsciously flattering his secret vanity, Julie d'Estrelle had conquered this savage nature. He considered her condescension interested, he attributed it entirely to her need of money; and yet the irresistible grace of her manner, and the tone of unaffected equality in which she addressed him, had flattered him as he had never before been flattered in his whole life. He resolved, therefore, that he would pretend to feel a sort of commiseration for Madam Thierry. He was really afraid that she would injure him in Julie's estimation, and by purchasing the house at Sèvres he persuaded himself that he would force his enemy to treat him with respect, since she would naturally imagine that he intended to confer it upon Julien.

Marcel, in the meanwhile, was doing his best to free Madam d'Estrelle gradually from her embarrassments. On the very evening of her visit to M. Antoine, he went to scold her for her rashness, and to insist that she should make her purchaser pay dearly for his sugar-plum. He found her but little inclined to enter into his schemes.

"Do what you please, dear M. Thierry," she said, "but do not ask my assistance. You told me that your

uncle was somewhat vain, that I could easily gain an influence over him, thanks to my title, and might lead him to ameliorate his sister-in-law's misfortunes. I hastened to try my power, and you tell me that you hope something from my efforts. I have done what my heart dictated, but do not talk to me of any further projects. Why are you so anxious to sell this pavilion? You told me yourself that my husband's creditors, since I have acquired a little more real estate, would be less exacting; that the marquis would never allow the hotel d'Estrelle to be sold; and that, for some time at least, you would allow me to forget my troubles. Keep your word with me! Let your uncle make his own offer for the pavilion, since these negotiations will give me an excuse for pleading Madam Thierry's cause. When I said that I did not wish her to be dispossessed of her lodging against her will, I spoke the simple truth, and I assure you that I shall regret exceedingly to have her leave the neighborhood."

Marcel, finding that he could not change her resolution, took his leave. He stopped at the pavilion, and told Madam Thierry, and Julien, who was also present, of the efforts that the generous countess had made in their behalf, and the kind sentiments with which she regarded them.

Madam Thierry was so touched, that she could not restrain her tears. Julien had played his part so well, that her fears in regard to him had been dissipated, and, pouring forth, at last, the gratitude with which her heart was full, and which she had with difficulty repressed for several days, she broke out into an enthusiastic eulogy of Julie d'Estrelle. The poor mother, therefore, poured oil herself upon the flames.

Still, however, from moment to moment, her suspicions returned. At every word that she uttered she glanced stealthily at Julien, to see how he received her remarks. His perfect self-possession reassured her, until a sudden outbreak revealed his true state of feeling. Madam Thierry was saying to Marcel that she did not wish to keep the countess from selling the pavilion, and would

pretend that she felt no regret at giving up her lodging, when Julien interposed vehemently:

"Move again?" he cried. "We cannot do it. We have spent too much, in proportion to our means, in getting established here."

"Your uncle will provide for that," said Marcel; "if he forces you to move, I will do my best to extort from him —"

"My dear friend," Julien continued, with increased animation, "your zeal and goodness are incomparable; but you know perfectly well that my mother dislikes to have you make any advances to uncle Antoine. All that you have done hitherto has been against her will, and she would have forbidden you positively to make any appeal to him, if it had not been out of consideration for me. It is not for us to judge whether she is right or wrong in detesting him as she does. For my part, I should have been willing to make all possible concessions, even if I suffered in doing so, to a man with such a singular character; but I cannot allow my mother's pride to be wounded."

"No, no! I have no pride," cried Madam Thierry; "I cast my pride from me, Julien! You are working too much; you will fall ill if we refuse to negotiate with M. Antoine. Whatever Marcel's plans may be, they have my approval; even if I must be humiliated, I shall be happy. Let us do our duty before everything else: let us pay our debts. We will tell the countess that it is a matter of indifference to us whether we live here or elsewhere, and beg her to conclude the sale; and let Marcel say to M. Thierry that we demand our rights, or that we implore his generosity. I am willing to make every sacrifice so that you recover your repose and health."

"My health is excellent," replied Julien, warmly; "and my repose will be very much disturbed by moving again. I like my studio; I have a work on hand —"

"But you are speaking selfishly, my child! You do not remember that this lady is being tormented by her creditors, just as we are, and even more than we are, for the present."

"And you think M. Antoine will relieve her by purchasing this hovel? Marcel is not so foolish!"

"My opinion is," said Marcel, "that M. Antoine will submit to all the conditions that the countess may choose to impose; he will pay a high price for the pavilion, and will not compel you to move. Let me alone, and I may, perhaps, lead him to do something still better."

"What?" said Madame Thierry.

"That is my secret. You shall know about it later, if I do not fail."

"Ah, *mon Dieu!*" said Madam Thierry, interrupting the conversation, "I have forgotten my snuff-box; go and bring it to me, Julien."

Julien went up stairs, and his mother took advantage of the moment's tête-à-tête that she had contrived to obtain with Marcel, to say quickly, —

"Take care, my dear friend! We are threatened with a great danger: Julien is in love with the countess."

"What are you saying?" cried Marcel, in perfect amazement; "you are dreaming, my good aunt; it is impossible."

"Speak lower. It is possible, — it is a fact. Do what you can to get us out of this dangerous abode. Find some means, without allowing him to suspect what I have told you. Save him, — save me! Silence, — he is coming."

Julien performed his errand with the utmost despatch. He was eager to take part again in the conversation; but when he entered the room he noticed that his mother looked embarrassed, and that Marcel seemed surprised and troubled. He felt that his secret had been betrayed, and immediately assumed an air of cheerful indifference that no longer deceived Madam Thierry, but which completely reassured the lawyer. The latter went away promising himself that he would sound his cousin when an opportunity occurred, but persuaded that Madam Thierry, agitated by the events of the last few days, was a little out of her mind.

Marcel soon made a discovery much more surprising

than this, — so surprising, in fact, that we beg our readers to prepare themselves for it a little in advance.

On the appointed day, uncle Antoine went to call upon Madam d'Estrelle. He found her simple and natural as ever, and quite as charming, — perhaps even more charming, — than at their first interview. She greeted the horticulturist just as she would have done a person of her own class. Unaccustomed to society, but endowed with penetration, he felt that his reception was perfect, and that he had never been treated so well by a person of her social position.

He saw, also, that she was really indifferent to the question of money. It was evident that her courtesy had not been assumed to obtain any ulterior object whatever, — even that of reconciling him to Madam Thierry, — since she expressed her desire to see them reconciled frankly and cordially.

M. Thierry returned from this interview radiant with a delight that he no longer took any pains to conceal. When Marcel saw him, he was obliged to confess that, in certain cases, straightforward honesty is the best diplomacy; and that Madam d'Estrelle had done more for her protégés and herself, by following her natural instinct, than she would have done if she had been more artful.

"Now then," said M. Antoine, "we must settle this matter of the pavilion. I consider it worth forty thousand francs, and that is what I intend to pay for it. I shall want to enter into possession immediately, and it is my duty, therefore, to meet any claims that Madam Thierry may urge. I don't want to have any discussion with that woman. Tell her that I release her from the six thousand francs for which I am security; here is my receipt. Furthermore, if she requires a small amount over and above this, to defray the expenses of moving, she shall have it. Go, and don't let her break my head any longer with her troubles. In the first place, however, take my offer, — which I think is very generous, — to the countess, and tell her of my promise to indemnify her protégés, according to her wish."

Marcel was amazed, but delighted. He carried this

good news, in the first place, to Madam Thierry, who thanked her stars, and was ready to bless even her brother-in-law, she was so grateful to him for forcing her to move as quickly as possible, and at all costs.

Madam d'Estrelle was not so well pleased; she had had another interview with the amiable widow, she enjoyed her society and regretted to lose it, and then her delicacy was offended by M. Antoine's munificent offer, which seemed to her the ostentatious folly of a plebeian. She felt that she would be humiliated by accepting it.

"He will think," she said, "that I have been manœuvring to induce him to pay this extravagant price, and that would annoy me exceedingly. No indeed! I shall only accept half that he offers; I prefer to decline his generosity, and retain his respect and my influence, which I can exert in favor of the poor Thierrys. Tell him the price of the pavilion is twenty thousand francs, and that I ask, furthermore, the continuation of his sister-in-law's lease."

"But my aunt is anxious to move," replied Marcel; "you must remember that the inducement he offers is a matter of great importance."

"Then say nothing about her affairs in my name; but remember that my dignity is intrusted to you, and do not allow it to be compromised."

This reply, transmitted to M. Antoine, led to an explosion by which the lawyer was dumbfounded.

"So," cried the rich man, "she refuses to accept a favor from me; for, knowing her embarassments, I was going to do her a favor. I was going to treat her like a friend, since she treated me like one. Ah! you see, Marcel, she is scornful, she despises me, she told me a lie when she said that she thought highly of me! Very well, since this is the case, I will be revenged! Yes, cruelly revenged; she shall have her deserts! By heavens, I will make her beg my help."

The face of the extravagant old man was still rather handsome, and at this moment it looked unmistakably wicked. Marcel gazed upon him in silence.

"What is this new mystery?" he said to himself, scrutinizing his uncle's piercing black eyes, flashing with spite and indignation. "Can wounded vanity culminate in delirium? Is my uncle losing his senses? Has the abstracted, solitary, monotonous life that he has led so long, been too much for him? Will the rage that he constantly expresses against all the feelings that warm and illumine the heart, lead, in the long run, to insanity?"

Antoine, without noticing Marcel's scrutiny, continued vehemently, —

"I understand what you are all about! You want Madam Thierry to get the benefit of my generosity. Now, for my part, I have not the least idea of making a fool of myself for the sake of Mademoiselle de Meuil. For a long time I have ceased to feel either hatred or friendship for that person. Let her go to the devil, — I never want to hear her spoken of again. I will pay forty thousand francs for the pavilion, or I will not purchase it. That is my final decision."

The affair remained in this state for several days. Madam d'Estrelle laughed good-humoredly at what she considered the old plebeian's fit of insanity, while the latter, unknown to Marcel, acted as if his madness had reached a climax.

Purchasing secretly the claims of all the creditors who were threatening the widow of the Count d'Estrelle, he put himself into a position that would enable him, — according to her conduct to him, — to destroy, or restore her to prosperity. Under a fictitious name he purchased, also, the house at Sèvres, with all its rich and precious furniture, and put it under the charge of a housekeeper. All this was accomplished in a short time, and with great expenditure. Finally, one day, having found out from Marcel about the intimate friends of Madam d'Estrelle, he went to call upon the Baroness d'Ancourt. The baroness received him in great state, but deigned, nevertheless, to listen to him attentively, when she learned that he had come to enable her to save Madam d'Estrelle from certain ruin.

Their conversation was long and mysterious. The

servants of the hotel d'Ancourt were very much puzzled at this conference between their haughty mistress and a sort of presuming peasant, and still more so at the nature of the interview. Now the resounding voice of the baroness was heard breaking suddenly forth, and then the harsh voice of her rustic visitor; they were quarrelling, in short, and their dispute was interrupted with bursts of merriment or mockery; for the baroness laughed, at moments, so as to shake the glasses.

An hour after, the baroness hastened to call upon Madam d'Estrelle.

"My dear," she said, in an agitated voice, "I bring you five millions, or misery; — choose."

"Ah! an old husband, is it not so?" said Julie; "you keep to your idea."

"A very old husband; but five millions!"

"And a great name, undoubtedly?"

"No name at all! — a thorough plebeian; but five millions, Julie!"

"An honest man, at least?"

"He is considered so; have you decided?"

"Yes, I refuse him! Would not you do the same? Would you respect me if I should do otherwise?"

"I told him you would say so. I ordered him out of the house. I made fun of him. He replied, obstinately, 'Five millions, madam, five millions!'"

"And he convinced you, since you have come to me!"

"Convinced or not, I was surprised, dazzled; I said, like, the queen, 'You urge me so strongly.'"

"Then you advise me to say yes?"

"Do not say yes, say *perhaps*, and reflect; I will reflect also, for, at this moment, my head is not clear. These millions have intoxicated me. What would you have? The man is old, — in a little while you will be free: people will stop crying out against the mésalliance! besides, every one knows that you, yourself, are not noble. You can open drawing-rooms that will dazzle all Paris, and all Paris will rush to your fêtes; for, when all is said, Paris has but one idea: to seek amusement,

and go where it is to be found. You can give balls, concerts, private theatricals; can fill your rooms with artists, beautiful singers, fine talkers, brilliant people, in short, able to entertain and amuse the stupid aristocrats. Ah! if I had five millions, — if I had only two, — I should know what to do with them! Come, do not think me a fool, and do not be a coward. Accept vulgarity and opulence."

"And the old age of the husband?"

"A reason the more!"

Julie was indignant and Amelie excited; they quarrelled. Madam d'Ancourt did not tell her the name of her suitor, and Julie did not think to inquire. Fearing that her impetuous friend might compromise her by allowing her protégé to hope, she commissioned Marcel to find out who he was, and tell him plainly of her refusal. Marcel went to Madam d'Ancourt to learn the name of the millionaire.

"Ah, she has reconsidered her decision?" cried the baroness.

"No, madam, quite the contrary."

"Very well, you shall not know his name. I promised on my honor not to reveal it, in case he was rejected."

Marcel went to the hotel Melcy. He suspected the truth, but had said nothing to the countess, for he feared, with good reason, that she would reproach him for having introduced her to an insane old man. Besides, Marcel valued his uncle's fortune only at two millions, — this was all that he claimed to be worth; and still felt doubtful, therefore, as to whether he really was the person in question. He was in a measure misled by the five millions that had been dinned into Julie's ears as the amount of her suitor's fortune.

"So, uncle," he said, abruptly, as soon as he entered, "you are worth five millions?"

"Why not thirty?" said the old man, shrugging his shoulders. "Have you gone crazy?"

It was in vain that Marcel teased him with questions; his uncle remained impenetrable. A great event had just occurred in his establishment, that had really di-

verted his mind from his dreams of marriage, so that it was more easy for him to conceal the truth. The mysterious lily that he had so often contemplated, watched, watered, and tended, — the flower that was to bear his name, — during the last few days of neglect and abandonment had suddenly put forth a vigorous shoot, already covered with well-swollen buds. One of these buds was already partly open, and within the calyx could be seen silken petals of incomparable beauty, — white, lustrous, and spotted with a brilliant rose. The horticulturist was beside himself with joy. Animated, almost consoled for his matrimonial mishaps, he walked up and down his greenhouse in a great state of agitation, or paused to watch the opening of his flower, while he cried, again and again, —

"This shall be the one! This shall be the one! I am settled. This shall be the *Antonia Thierrii;* and all the amateurs of Europe, if they choose, may burst with rage."

"Upon my word," said Marcel to himself, "I am more in doubt than ever. Is it with the *Antonia* or with the countess that my uncle is in love?"

III.

THE vanity of the horticulturist had resumed its sway over Antoine's mind. Seeing this, and reflecting that he might turn his uncle's enthusiasm to account for the benefit of his protégés, Marcel bestowed the greatest praise upon the *Antonia.*

"You intend, I suppose, to send it to the *Jardin des Roi,*" he said. "The botanists there ought to feel a great esteem for you."

"They will count upon this one in vain," replied M. Antoine. "They may look at it until they are tired, describe it in their beautiful language, give a scientific account of it, as they say; but the specimen is unique,

and I shall not part from it until I have a number of offshoots."

"But if it dies without propagating?"

"My name will live in the catalogues, even then."

"That is not enough! If I were you, I would have it painted, to provide against accidents."

"How painted? Do people paint flowers nowadays? Oh, I understand! you mean that I ought to have its portrait taken? I have thought about that with my other rare plants; but I had quarrelled with my brother, and the other painters whom I employed were fools; their daubs never satisfied me. I paid them a high price for their work, and afterwards cut up the canvas, or tore the paper."

"Did you never think of Julien?"

"Bah! Julien, — an apprentice!"

"Have you ever seen any of his work?"

"No, faith, nothing."

"Would you like me to bring you —?"

"No, nothing, I tell you. We have quarrelled."

"Not at all. He has called upon you regularly every year, on the first of January, and you have always been pleased with him."

"That is true. He has been well brought up, he is quite sensible, and is good-looking. But, since I refused to advance the money to purchase the house at Sèvres —"

"Julien has never blamed you, or uttered a discontented word on the subject. I can assure of you that, upon my honor."

"That may be true, and yet he may not have the necessary talent —"

"Hold! a small specimen will do as well as a large one. Take your magnifying-glass, and look at this."

Marcel drew from his pocket a pretty little shell snuff-box, with a bouquet painted upon it in miniature, by Julien. Although this was not his style, he had copied one of his pictures on this microscopic scale, so as to make this present to Marcel; and the little painting was a veritable chef d'œuvre.

Uncle Antoine was too ignorant of art to appreciate its real merit; but he understood the anatomy of every part of a plant as well as the most thorough botanist, and if his magnifying-glass did not enable him to count the stamens of every flower, and the nerves of every leaf, it proved to him, at least, that the artist, in sacrificing details to produce his general effect, had not sinned against nature; that he had not been led astray by any error, fancy, or heresy, contradicting the inviolable laws of creation.

After examining it for a long time, he asked, ingenuously, whether Julien could paint as large as life; and, when Marcel replied in the affirmative, decided that he would let him take the portrait of the *Antonia Thierrii.* He added, however, that he would require him to work under his own eyes, so that he might watch over him, and see that he was exact in the most minute details.

"I know what these painters are!" he said; "they want to interpret, — they want to do better than nature. They must have their *atmosphere*, *light*, *effect!* Oh, I remember all their stupid words! If Julien will be obedient, both of us together, perhaps, may succeed in producing something really beautiful. Go and tell him what I want, and let him hold himself in readiness to pass an hour here day after to-morrow; it will be in full bloom by that time."

Marcel went to consult Julien, and returned to tell Antoine that the artist would require two days, at least, for studying his model, and that he could not allow him to see his sketches until they were completed, when he would be willing to submit them to him and make such alteration as he desired, if he did not find them satisfactory.

"He is very proud," said uncle Antoine, impatiently; "look at that, — he is already making difficulties just like his father. Does he suppose I am asking him to paint the flower as a favor? I intend to pay him, and will pay as high a price as any one, no matter who. Pray what is a day of this gentleman's labor worth?"

"He does not ask you to pay him. If you are pleased with what he does, he will ask your patronage."

"It is easy to know what that means; he will ask me —"

"Nothing at all. You shall settle the matter yourself. Every one knows that you are generous when you do not dislike people, and you will not dislike Julien when you know him better."

"Very well; let him come immediately, — let him begin."

"No, he is very busy to-day; he will give you several hours, to begin with, to-morrow."

The next day, in fact, Julien began to study the plant, and made several sketches, presenting it under different aspects. M. Antoine, faithful to their agreement, did not see these sketches until the artist submitted them to him. He was more pleased than he cared to acknowledge. This conscientious manner of studying its structure and attitude surprised and delighted him. Julien talked very little; he looked constantly at his model, and he looked at it with real artistic enthusiasm, as if he loved it passionately. The horticulturist began immediately to feel a sort of respect for him, and, as Madam Thierry had never told her son of her brother-in-law's foolish conduct, as nothing in the face or manner of the young man indicated that he regarded his uncle with the least aversion, Antoine, who felt a real need of forming some human ties, — a necessity that had increased in proportion with his vanity, — conceived for him (if we may say so) a sort of blind and unconscious friendship.

On the second day Julien began to paint; his uncle could no longer follow the progress that he was making, and became uneasy. It was much worse when Julien declared that he must finish the painting in his studio, where the light was arranged to suit him, and where he had a number of little objects, all of which he could not remember to bring with him, and which he wanted to use. It was quite a distance from the pavilion to the hotel Melcy, and, on the next day, they would have no time to lose in coming and going; he would have to

seize the expression of the plant on the wing, when it was in full bloom.

But the model might be injured by being moved; the flower might wither prematurely, the stalk might be weakened, its freshness might be tarnished! The artist was firm, and uncle Antoine resolved that he would carry his precious *Antonia* to the studio himself, even at the risk of meeting Madam Thierry, and being forced to bow to her.

Julien, in compelling his uncle to make this hard sacrifice, had not yielded to the petty caprice of a fanciful artist. He had followed the advice of Marcel, who was anxious to bring about a reconciliation between the opposing members of the family; and who, as he could not persuade Madam Thierry to make any advances, thought the best plan would be to surprise her by a chance interview with her enemy.

We have represented Madam Thierry as perfect, — and she really was about as perfect as a human being can be; — still, however, she had one little fault. Although free from coquetry, from vanity, and from the weakness of thinking herself young, she had never really said to herself, "I am old." What woman of her time was more sensible and clear-sighted? Her youth had bloomed perennially in madrigals, gallant speeches, and delicate attentions. She had been so pretty, and was so well-preserved! Her husband, although he had ruined her by his imprudence, had been in love with her up to his last day; and it really seemed as if this old couple had been destined to bring Philemon and Baucis to life again. As she had never ceased to hear that she was still charming, — relatively to her age this was perfectly true, — good Madam Thierry had never ceased to feel like and consider herself a woman, and, after a laspe of forty years, she had not forgotten how deeply her pride and dignity had been wounded by the pretensions of the ship-owner. This rude man, who had had the audacity to say to her, "Look at me. I am rich; you can love me instead of my brother," had caused her the only real mortification to which she had been exposed

in consequence of her elopement, which the world, at the time, had considered an unpardonable imprudence. In after years her beauty, agreeable manners, and noble character, had caused her to be sought by her husband's admirers. She had been able to lift her head, to triumph over prejudices, and had occupied an exceptional and enviable position in public opinion. She had been unusually happy, therefore; but never had she forgotten this one insult, nor could she think of it without bitterness. It seemed to her that she had been contaminated once in her life, by the offers and hopes of M. Antoine.

Marcel could not penetrate these subtle, feminine sentiments. He imagined that time must have taught Madam Thierry to smile at this ridiculous adventure, and that she had been perfectly sincere in declaring her readiness to pardon the past, so as to obtain the favor of their rich relative for Julien.

Julien was not a man to covet his uncle Antoine's wealth. He had never said to himself that, if he would consent to flatter him, he might look forward to becoming his principal heir. For a long time he had refused to ask him the slightest favor; but he longed to recover for his mother the house where she had been so happy, and this desire had conquered his pride. He had resolved to devote his life, if necessary, to paying his debts, and no longer blushed at Marcel's efforts to persuade Antoine to advance the necessary funds.

Nevertheless, when he saw his uncle nearing the house, Julien reproached himself for having deceived his mother. He feared that the surprise would be too much for her, and, at the last moment, tried to prepare her for what she had to expect. Madam Thierry did not lose courage; but, as soon as she had bowed to M. Antoine, she made some excuse for going to her room, and there she remained. It seemed to her impossible to endure the presence of this disagreeable personage. Antoine, who had not seen her for forty years, did not recognize her at first, and was not sufficiently self-possessed to apologize for his forgetfulness. There was

a gate opening from his garden into the rue de Babylone, quite near the pavilion, and he had taken this path to the studio. Unwilling to let any one touch his variegated lily, he had brought it himself. He placed it himself upon the table of the little studio, he took off the great horn of white paper protecting it, and, when the artist began to work, took up a newspaper which Madam d'Estrelle sent to Madam Thierry every morning, and fell asleep over it in a corner of the studio.

Julien was expecting Marcel, who had promised to try and bring about the proposed reconciliation; but Marcel, detained by business, did not arrive. Madam Thierry did not appear. Julien felt that he could not break the ice without the help of his cousin: he did not say a word, therefore; he worked, did his best, and thought of Julie.

Uncle Antoine was only asleep with half an eye. In the house of the woman he hated, and so near the hotel d'Estrelle, the abode of his new fancy, he felt restless, disturbed, agitated; he was more troubled than he would have cared to confess. He got up, walked to and fro, with his creaking boots; sat down again, and finally, forgetting his lily for a moment, began to talk to Julien.

"How about your work," he said; "have you a great deal to do?"

"A great deal," replied Julien.

"Do people pay you well?"

"Quite well; I have no cause to complain."

"How much do you earn a day?"

"A dozen francs or so," said Julien, smiling.

"That is very little; but your father made still less at your age, and I suppose you will increase your price from year to year."

"I hope and intend to do so."

"You are prudent and systematic, I am told."

"Yes, uncle; I am obliged to be so."

"Do you go much into society?"

"I have no time to go."

"You know, however, persons of good family?"

"My father's friends have not forgotten me."

"You sometimes return their visits?"

"Very seldom, and only when necessary."

"How about the Baroness d'Ancourt, — do you know her?"

"Merely by name, — nothing more."

"She is a friend of Madam d'Estrelle?"

"I have no idea."

"But you must know Madam d'Estrelle?"

"No, uncle."

"Have you never seen her?"

"Never."

Julien uttered this lie courageously. It seemed to him that every one was trying to find out his secret, and he had resolved to hide it with the most savage resolution.

"That is curious," said uncle Antoine, who, perhaps, really did feel some suspicion upon this point, if only to be true to his habit of suspecting every one; "your mother spends hours, whole days, they say, in her garden, and even in her drawing-room, and you — "

"I am not my mother."

"You mean that you are not noble."

"I mean that I am not of an age to seek the acquaint ance of a lady who is living secluded, and who only receives visits from elderly persons."

"You regret very much, no doubt, that you are too young?"

"On the contrary, I like very much to be young, I can assure you," said Julien, laughing at his uncle's whimsical reflections.

Antoine, defeated, began to walk up and down the room again, with short, jerking steps; again he paused, and said to Julien, —

"How much longer will you have to work?"

"Two or three hours."

"Can I look at the picture?"

"If you choose."

"Ah ah!" he cried, "that is not so bad; that begins to look like something; but you are painting all the background, — where will you put the name of the flower? I want it in large gilt letters."

"Then it must not be put anywhere; it would spoil the effect."

"You don't say so! I must have my name, though!"

"Put it in large, black letters, upon a medallion in relief, above or below the gilt frame."

"That is a good idea, upon my word! Make a chef-d'œuvre, and I will invite you to the ceremony of the baptism."

"Bah, a ceremony!"

"Yes; the botanists of the *Jardin du Roi* are going to breakfast with me to-morrow morning. I have invited them, and they have accepted. I am going to have a sort of fête; and, as it tires me to sit here with my arms crossed, doing nothing, I will return to my house and see how things are going on. Take care of my lily; don't let yourself be disturbed; work without stopping; I will return in an hour."

Julien was working now with enthusiasm and rapidity; every stroke of his pencil seemed to transfer the life of the wonderful plant to the canvas. Uncle Antoine was struck by his aspect; he smiled, and, becoming a little humanized, tapped the young man upon the shoulder, saying, —

"Courage, my lad, courage! Satisfy me, and you will have no cause to regret it."

He went out; but, instead of returning to his garden, went mechanically to the hotel d'Estrelle. Solitude, wealth, ennui and vanity, had weakened and half-maddened the old man's mind, and a world of confused ideas, — cheerful, gloomy, and audacious, — were whirling wildly through his brain.

"I was wrong," he said, "to confide my suit to that foolish baroness. She performed her part badly, and did not even mention my name! She said that I was an old plebeian, and that was all; the little countess never imagined that the person referred to was a well-preserved man whom she herself had praised for his good health and good looks, — a man whom she knows to be generous and great, and whose talents as an agricultural amateur and producer of rare plants are not to be despised. I

must end the affair one way or the other: I will offer myself, and find out whether I am to love or hate her."

He entered the hotel boldly, and asked to speak to the countess on business. She hesitated for a moment whether to admit him. Knowing that he was whimsical, and thinking him a monomaniac, she would have preferred to have Marcel present at the interview. But she knew how sensitive her old neighbor was, and, fearing that she might injure Madam Thierry's interests by offending him, allowed him to enter. Madam d'Estrelle was alone; but she would have considered it absurdly prudish to feel alarmed about a tête-à-tête with an old man, well known for the austerity of his manners.

The rich man had called upon her prepared for battle: he imagined that he would have to fight to obtain an interview. When he found, on the contary, that he was admitted without opposition, after two minutes delay, when he saw that his beautiful neighbor received him kindly and affably, although with a little reserve, his courage abandoned him. Like all people who live in the world of their own thoughts, unchecked and uncontrolled, no one could be bolder in forming plans. It was his audacity that had enriched him, and he confided in it.

But, as he had always acted from behind a curtain as it were, he was as incapable of taking a step upon the stage of social life, or of conversing with a woman, as he would have been of commanding a ship, or conducting negotiations with the Algonquins. He grew pale, stammered, put his hat on after taking it off, and, in short, was so agitated, that Madam d'Estrelle felt surprised and distressed, and was obliged to come to his assistance by referring at once to the subject which she supposed to be the object of his visit.

"So, my neighbor," she said kindly, "we are at odds about this unfortunate pavilion, which I had hoped would be the means of bringing us to a good understanding and making us friends. Do you know that I feel like scolding you, and that I consider you very unreasonable?"

"Oh, it is well known that I am a fool," replied Antoine, morosely; "I hear it so often that I shall end by believing it."

"I only ask to be undeceived," replied Julie; "can you give me any good reason for accepting the sort of present that you offer me? I defy you to do so!"

"You defy me? Then you want me to speak. The reason is clear enough, — I feel an interest in you!"

"You are very good," said Julie, with a smile, in which there was a touch of irony, "but — "

"It is just so, countess; you are a person that one cannot help thinking about, and so I thought about you, — what the devil would you have? I said to myself, 'It is a pity that a person so, — a lady who, — a person of good family, in a word, should be in the hands of the bailiffs. I am only a plebeian, but I am not such a miser as the fine gentlemen and the fine ladies of her family.' That is why I said what I did say; but you misunderstood it all, which proves that you despise me."

"You are mistaken in that!" cried the countess; "despise you for wanting to do a good action? No! a hundred times no! It would be impossible."

"Then why refuse my offer?"

"Listen to me, Monsieur Thierry; will you give me your word of honor as an honest man that you are perfectly convinced of the sincerity, — the personal disinterestedness, — of my conduct towards you?"

"Yes, madam, I give you my word of honor. The devil! do you suppose, otherwise, that I should ever have come to see you again?"

"Very well, I accept your offer," said Julie, holding out her hand; "but upon one condition, — that you will give me back your friendship."

Old Antoine was completely beside himself when he felt this little soft hand in his hard, dry palm. He had a sort of vertigo; and, as he did not know what to do with this woman's hand, — to kiss it he would have thought an impropriety, and he dared not press it, — he let it drop, and stammered out his thanks in a very confused manner, but with heartfelt emotion.

"Since you treat me as if I were conferring a favor upon you," said Madam d'Estrelle, "I warn you that I shall become exacting. I really need only twenty thousand francs for the present; let me offer the other twenty thousand from you to Madam Thierry."

"No, no! it cannot be!" said Antoine, losing his temper; "she would refuse. That woman detests me! I have just paid her a visit. She turned her back upon me, and went and hid in her garret."

"You must have wronged her in some way, my neighbor?"

"Never! If she tries to make you think otherwise, — let her say what she chooses, — I am an honest man."

"She has never said otherwise."

"Has she never spoken to you about me? Come now, — tell me the truth, — upon your honor."

"Upon my honor, never!"

"Then, — stop a moment! — tell her to respect me as she ought, and don't talk about giving her money that belongs to you; for, — the devil take me, — if you make much of me, and don't blush to acknowledge my friendship, I will give her, — yes, I will give her a pretty present! I will buy her house at Sèvres. There! What will you say to that?"

"I will say, M. Thierry," cried Madam d'Estrelle, deeply touched, "that you are the best of men!"

"The best, in truth?" cried the rich man, so flattered that he was like a person intoxicated; — "the best, do you say?"

"Yes, — the best rich man that I know!"

"That is something worth while! Will you breakfast at my house to-morrow with some savants, — some very famous and learned men, — and witness a baptism? Will you be godmother, and accept me as godfather?"

"Yes! at what hour?"

"At noon."

"I will go, — but in the company of some lady, since you have persons at your house whom I do not know. I will go with —"

"My sister-in-law. I see what is coming!"

"Very well, — do you forbid it?"

"Forbid it? Do you know that you talk as if I were your master?" he said, with a sort of mysterious fatuity.

"As if you were my father?" replied Julie, frankly.

An unchaste old man would have been wounded by this speech, but Antoine was chaste in his folly; we can affirm, positively, that he was not in love with Julie; it was the countess only who was the object of his passion. Whether she was his adopted daughter, or his wife, mattered little to him. Provided that he could show her off to his solemn company on the next day, — to the savants, — Marcel, Julien, to Madam Thierry above all, and to all his gardeners; — provided that he could see her leaning upon his arm or seated at his table, talking to him with filial friendship, without any fear of what the world might say, — provided that all this might be, it seemed to him that he would be perfectly happy.

"And if I am not contented even then," he thought, — talking to himself about himself, with a sort of ineffable tenderness, — "I shall have time enough to tame her, and lead her to think about marriage afterwards; and when she has sacrificed her title to be my wife, we will see then whether the name of Thierry the elder will not be worthy to stand by that of my brother, Thierry the painter!"

"Since you are so gracious," he said to Julie, "I will be gracious also. I will do whatever you wish. I commission you, for example, to give my invitation to Madam André Thierry, and if she prevents you from keeping your appointment to-morrow, tell her that I will never pardon her in all my life."

"I will take charge of her, my neighbor. Farewell, until to-morrow; have no fear!"

"Would it annoy you to say *my friend?*" replied Antoine, whose tongue was loosened by his secret happiness.

"It would not annoy me at all," replied Julie, laughing; "I will call you so to-morrow, if you keep your word."

"You will call me so — publicly?"

"Publicly — and with all my heart."

The old man went away reeling like a drunken man. In the street he talked to himself in a loud voice; his eyes flashed, and he made emphatic gestures. The passers-by took him for an escaped lunatic.

He followed the wall of the hotel d'Estrelle mechanically, for his first idea was to return to the studio, in order to see whether Julien was at work, and whether his lily was safe. Suddenly he remembered that the Baroness d'Ancourt might ruin all his hopes, by revealing to Madam d'Estrelle the name of the suitor whose cause she had espoused. Evidently Julie suspected nothing; she had no reason to imagine that her old neighbor was acting from an interested motive. He might gradually lead her to accept him as her husband, by impressing her duly with his wealth and magnificence; but he had wanted to go too fast, and had come very near spoiling everything. Since the baroness was not opposed to him, he must go to her house before doing anything else, tell her how matters stood, and urge her to be silent. He called a carriage that was passing, and ordered the coachman to drive to the hotel d'Ancourt.

Julie was deeply moved; like every generous person who has sought to inspire a good deed, and has carried her point, she lost all sense of her own personality in her sincere joy at what she had accomplished. Impatient to announce the important news to Madam André, and make her promise to be her chaperon at the breakfast at the hotel Melcy, she threw a light mantle of violet silk over her shoulders, and, — so utterly had she forgotten herself, — ran towards the pavilion. She thought no more of Julien than if he had never existed; or, at all events, did not remember that it was her duty to avoid him. She had never clearly understood how serious a matter this was; and, in her eagerness to see his mother, would not probably have hesitated, even if she had remembered it. Besides, she was alone. There was no one in the drawing-room, no one in the garden. Would the roses be scandalized at her imprudence? Would the

nightingales cry over the walls that Madam d'Estrelle had entered a house where she might, perhaps, meet a young man whom she had never seen?

Julien, at this moment, had no time to be watching for Julie's approach. He was wholly absorbed in his work. The lily could not promise to remain fresh and unchanged, until he had given the last touch to his picture. Madam Thierry was in her room with Marcel; he had arrived finally, and, after exchanging a few words with Julien, had gone to converse with his aunt. He wanted to lecture her, to make her confess, and to persuade her that the cause of her dislike to M. Antoine ought to remain concealed, as it had hitherto been, from the young artist.

Madam d'Estrelle struck lightly at the door of the pavilion. A great wagon, loaded with broken stones, was passing at this moment in the street. The noise of the wheels, the cries of the driver, and the cracking of the whip, completely drowned her feeble knock. Eager to see Madam Thierry before some surly message from the whimsical Antoine had informed her of his plans, and perhaps made her unwilling to agree to them, Madam d'Estrelle opened the outer door boldly; she opened a second door, and found herself in Julien's studio, alone and face to face with the young artist; he had placed his model in the light streaming from the window above this door, and Julie entered in a blaze of glory; it seemed as if she had come to him in a ray of sunshine.

Julien was so little prepared for this vision, that he came very near falling, as if thunderstruck. The blood rushed to his heart, and his face became whiter than M. Antoine's lily. He could neither speak nor bow; he stood motionless, with his pallet in his hand, his eyes fixed, — absolutely petrified.

Did the beautiful countess experience any corresponding emotion? At the sight of this young man, whose beauty was so faultless, — that type of beauty in which the nobility of the lines is only exceeded by the intelligence of the expression, — what took place in her heart and soul? Her first feeling was one of instinctive respect; for Julien was not unknown to her. She had

heard all about his honest and self-sacrificing life, his patient industry, at the same time so ardent and regular, his filial love, his noble sentiments; she knew how well he deserved the friendship and esteem of his devoted friends. She had sometimes felt a curiosity to see him; and, either because she considered it childish, or from a vague presentiment that their meeting would be dangerous to her peace, had forbidden herself to yield to this desire.

Why investigate further? It is enough that her heart was fully prepared for the reception of the sentiment that was to govern her life. She experienced a terrible shock. The agitation by which Julien was paralyzed overcame her also, and she remained for a moment as silent and motionless as he.

If any one had seen this beautiful couple, just as they had come from the hand of God, in some region inaccessible to social prejudices, meeting under the simple and glorious conditions reigning in an unfallen world, they would have said, without hesitation, that they had been destined for each other; that God had made this superb man for this charming woman, this tender and true woman for this ardent and proud man. In Julie, all was grace, tenderness, and sweetness; Julien was full of passion and magnanimity. When they beheld each other at last, in the radiance of the May sunshine, humid with the perfumes of a new life, each of them, as with an irresistible cry of love, pronounced, in their souls, the names that destiny (as if they had been intended to have only one name) had given them, — *Julie*, *Julien!*

Upon either side a great effort was necessary, before they could remember the social barriers by which they were separated.

"Ah me!" thought Julie; "this is the young painter. I thougnt he was a demi-god."

"Alas!" said Julien to himself, "this is the great lady. I thought she was half myself."

The countess was the first to bow, and ask whether he was not M. Julien Thierry. He bowed deeply, saying, with an expression of hypocritical doubt, —

"Madam the Countess d'Estrelle?"

Mockery! As if these questions were necessary to enable them to understand each other.

"Has your mother gone out?" said the countess.

"No, madam. I will go and call her."

And Julien did not stir; his feet seemed nailed to the floor.

"She is with my cousin, Marcel Thierry," he added. "Shall I ask him also to come down and receive the orders—?"

"Do not disturb either of them! If you will show me the way, I will go to your mother's room. But wait," she added, seeing that Julien was incapable of moving; "it will be better, perhaps, to prepare your mother. I did not see her yesterday; she may not be well."

"She is a little unwell, it is true."

"Then,—yes, you must prepare her for a surprise,—an agreeable surprise, God be praised!—but one by which she might be agitated. Make her understand, gently, that I bring great and good news in regard to the house at Sèvres."

Julien could not resist his desire to thank Madam d'Estrelle. His presence of mind had somewhat returned. He blessed her for what she had done for his mother, in terms as heartfelt as they were delicately expressed. Julie was deeply moved, but not surprised. With his reputation, and his irresistible face, Julien could not have spoken otherwise. After this the ice was broken, and all ceremony forgotten. Distrust would have seemed a mutual insult. They talked together for a moment with extraordinary ease and familiarity.

"It affords me happiness to have rendered your mother a service," said Julie, "you know this well. She must have told you how well I love her!"

"You are right to love her; you will never repent giving her your friendship. Her heart is worthy of yours."

"I wish I could feel that I was worthy of her confidence. Oh, she has told me about you! I know that

you worship her, and God will bless you for your devoted, filial love."

"He has blessed me already, since you tell me that I deserve His blessing."

"I tell you so most heartily. Why should I hesitate to say so? There are so few who are wholly worthy of our esteem."

"There are those whose esteem is so great a favor, that to obtain it you would accept the hate and scorn of all the rest of the world."

"Oh! you only say that out of politeness; you do not know me sufficiently —"

"You are mistaken, madam, — I know your goodness, the nobleness of your soul, the kindness of your heart. I could not fail to understand you unless I were both deaf and blind. And you, who scatter blessings upon all who surround you, cannot feel surprised to have inspired one whom you do not know with humble admiration and gratitude."

It seemed to Julie that the very air she breathed was on fire. She tried, mechanically, to recover herself, but had not the courage to withdraw from this dangerous conversation.

"Will you also be glad," she said, "to regain the house where you were brought up?"

"I shall be glad for my poor mother's sake, most certainly; but not upon my own account."

"Do you like Paris so well?"

"No, not at all; — but —"

Julien's kindling eyes, darkened by a cloud of emotion, expressed clearly enough what he thought. Julie understood only too well. She tried to speak of something else; she looked at the artist's sketches, she praised his talent, — that talent which had been revealed to her at the same time with his love; — she tried to tell him that she understood his art, but, in fact, it was his passion that she understood, and every word which they uttered betrayed their real preoccupation. The agitation of the one was communicated to the other; both became so confused that they scarcely knew what they were saying; and

finally Madam d'Estrelle turned to M. Antoine's lily, so as to have something to talk about.

"What a beautiful flower!" she said; "and how fragrant it is!"

"Do you like it?" cried Julien. And, with the impetuosity of a lover intoxicated with joy, he broke the stalk of the *Antonia Thierrii*, and offered the superb stem to Julie!

The countess had no idea of the interest attaching to this plant; she had not seen Marcel for several days; and, as Madam Thierry never mentioned her brother-in-law when she could help it, she had not heard it spoken of. Invited to a baptism on the following day at the hotel Melcy, she had concluded, naturally, that the object of M. Antoine's solicitude was the child of some retired gardener. She was far enough from imagining that Julien, in breaking this flower, severed all ties with his uncle, and cast his whole future,—a future, perhaps, of wealth and prosperity,— at the feet of his idol.

She uttered a cry of terror and surprise, however, at the artist's rash act.

"Ah, *mon Dieu!*" she said; "what have you done? Your model?"

"I have finished," replied Julien, eagerly.

"No, you have not finished; I can see that plainly!"

"I will finish it without a model; I know it by heart!"

For an instant, love of his art resumed its dominion over him; and, as he cast upon the lily a last glance of intellectual possession, Julie replaced it upon its stem, and said gayly and gracefully, with careless ease and self-forgetfulness,—

"I will hold it,— finish! it will not fade immediately. Come, make haste! Your picture is so beautiful! I shall never forgive myself for having interrupted you. Work,—I wish it!"

"You wish it?" said Julien, distractedly.

There was a second piece of canvas behind his picture; this he seized, and, working with ardor, with *fury*, he sketched and painted the delicate and lovely hand of

Madam d'Estrelle. The lily made no progress. Julie, although she knew it not, was holding it in vain, while waiting until it should bow its proud head never to be lifted again.

Oh, uncle Antoine, where were you while such a crime, without remorse and without terror, was being committed, under the eye of a sleeping or malicious Providence?

A slight sound upon the staircase recalled Julie to herself; it was Marcel, who was coming to tell Julien that his mother had consented to see M. Thierry on his return. Madam d'Estrelle, ashamed of being surprised alone with the artist, and on terms of such strange familiarity, planted the stem of the lily hurriedly in the light, moist earth of the vase. The *Antonia* did not seem aware of what had occurred, and remained fresh and beautiful. Marcel entered, and took no notice of the catastrophe.

The presence of the countess surprised him sufficiently; the latter was exceedingly disconcerted at meeting him, and Julien perceived this. He immediately conquered his emotion, with a manly effort, and informed Marcel that the countess had just entered, and wished to speak to his mother. At the same time he offered Julie a chair, as if she had not yet been seated; and, bowing respectfully, went to inform Madam Thierry of her presence.

Madam d'Estrelle was infinitely grateful to the artist for his presence of mind. This slight indication showed her that she was not dealing with a child, capable of compromising her by his awkardness and simplicity, but with a man, — watchful, and armed at all points, — ready to defend her from every danger, to preserve her, if necessary, from her own rashness. She loved him with her whole heart; and she felt that he was the master of her destiny, since there was already a secret between them, to be concealed from the scrutinizing gaze of their mutual friends.

While she was giving Marcel a rapid resumé of her conversation with M. Antoine, Julien entered his mother's room. His face was so radiant, that she cried, —

"*Mon Dieu!* how beautiful you are to-day. What has happened?"

"Madam d'Estrelle is below," said Julien; "she brings you joy and consolation. She has persuaded M. Antoine to purchase your house. Quick! put on your cap, and come and thank your good angel."

Surprised and delighted as Madam Thierry was, she was at the same time deeply grieved. Her mother's eye could no longer be deceived: she saw plainly the repressed passion concealed by Julien's apparent frankness, and was so moved that she burst into tears.

"How now! how now! what is the matter?" cried Julien. "My poor mother, you who have always been so courageous in misfortune, can you be so overcome by joy? No matter! Let your cap hang, since you cannot fasten it, and come as you are. Madam d'Estrelle will like to see you shed such tears as these; they will not trouble her, — come!"

"Julien! Julien! I am not weeping for joy alone; my heart is oppressed by sorrow, and, above all, by fear."

"You are afraid that you will have to thank M. Antoine! Nonsense, mother! That is too childish, — come!"

Madam Thierry was ready to faint. Julien was almost angry with her, for her emotion was making him lose the precious moments, — seconds that he might have passed by Julie's side. Marcel, who was delighted with the good news that the countess had brought, became impatient, in his turn, at his aunt's delay, and came up stairs to hasten her. Julie remained alone in the studio, therefore, for several moments.

These moments, — swiftly as they passed, — counted in after years like an age in her life, for they brought her a divine revelation; the light flashed into her soul in a single dazzling flame. "Your happiness is found," said an inward voice, endowed with sovereign authority; "it is here. A devoted love, — a simple, retired, domestic life; — it is this, and this alone, that can make you happy. Julien's mother experienced this happiness during the whole period of her youth. Intercourse with the world and wealth did not add to her felicity. They diminished

it rather, by withdrawing her from her domestic life. Forget the world, — it is worth your while! Have done forever with a past which has misled you, and brought you into conflict with yourself. Reconcile yourself to your origin, — derived from the middle classes far more than from the nobility; with your conscience, which reproaches you for having been carried away by a desire for worldly glory, and for having yielded to the threats of ambitious parents; seek the grace of God, who abandons the worldly-minded; be true, be strong, — like this young man who worships you, and who has just revealed to you, in a single glance, the grandest, the noblest passion that you will ever inspire."

While listening to this mysterious voice of her own soul, Julie gazed around her, and was surprised to feel her agitation succeeded by a sense of divine repose. This was due, in part, to a very simple, natural phenomenon. Julie was short-sighted; and in this room, so much smaller than the apartments to which she was accustomed, she could see, in spite of her defective vision, all the details of every object that surrounded her. The pavilion Louis XIII. was a very humble abode; but, in spite of its simplicity, it was fitted up with artistic taste and elegance. The building, in itself, was well-proportioned. In the deep and large embrasure of the window, as in a little sanctuary, the widow had placed her arm-chair, her spinning-wheel, her candle-stand, and her footstool, — giving this part of the studio the aspect of a Flemish interior; the rest of the room had been thoroughly repaired, although with the strictest economy. The wainscoting was painted gray, and was perfectly plain, except for a few panels, whose lines were straight throughout, but harmoniously proportioned; the ceiling was white, and, although not very high, it was not so low as to be oppressive; above each door was an oval garland carved in wood, of quiet leafage, and painted, like the headings of the panels, of a darker gray than the rest of the woodwork. Two or three valuable flower and fruit-pieces, by André Thierry, several sketches, and two little studies, by Julien, hung upon the walls. On

a bracket, opposite a mirror, stood a large vase of Rouen porcelain, full of natural flowers and long vines, gracefully arranged, and falling to the floor. A little carpet before the sofa, two or three easels, shells, boxes of insects, statuettes and engravings upon a large table, plain oak furniture, and a harp, — the only costly object to be seen, — its worn, gilt strings glittering in a dark corner, — completed the simple interior. Certainly there was nothing elegant or luxurious in all this, but an air of exquisite neatness and taste gave a charm to the quiet room, and the soft, dreamy light made you feel inclined to reverie. The lilacs growing in thick masses so near the house, and the curtains before the lower part of the windows, made the studio a little dark. But there was something in this greenish light that was strangely poetical, and a sentiment of holy meditation seemed floating in the atmosphere, that penetrated Julie's very soul. What more would be necessary than such a retreat as this, — so modest, so humble, — to enable her to enjoy spiritual happiness, — the eternal ecstacy of a true moral life? What did Julie care for sumptuous furniture, etagères loaded with a thousand baubles that she never looked at, — blue ceilings spangled with stars of gold over her head, Gobelins carpets under her feet, Sèvres vases to hold her bouquets, liveried lackeys to announce her friends, boxes of Chinese fans, and caskets full of diamonds? They had amused her only for a day; can playthings distract a weary heart? Julien's simple and laborious life, — his touching devotion to his mother, — his secret, humble love, — as he himself had called it, — was there not something in all this purer and greater than she could ever hope to find in the life and devotion of a frivolous or blasé *seigneur?*

A sparrow that Julien had tamed, and which lived in freedom upon the neighboring trees, flew into the studio, and lighted familiarly upon her shoulder. She was amazed; in this simple incident she saw for a moment a prodigy, — an ancient augury, — an omen of happiness or victory! She was really intoxicated.

Madam Thierry entered the room at last, in the utmost agitation. She had insisted upon being allowed to speak·

to the countess alone. She threw herself at her feet, and, obliged by her to rise, spoke as follows: —

"You are good as an angel, my beautiful neighbor. May God bless you a thousand times! But I must show you my grief as well as my joy; my son, my dear Julien, will be lost unless he quickly renounces the hope of ever seeing you again. He loves you, madam, — loves you distractedly. When he told me that he had only seen you from a distance, he was deceiving me: he sees you every day; he gazes at you by stealth, — he intoxicates himself, kills himself by gazing upon you. He no longer eats, no longer sleeps; he is sad, his eyes are hollow, he is consumed by fever. He has never loved, — but I know how he will love, — how he loves already. His is a nature full of enthusiasm, faith, devotion. Discourage him, madam, if it is possible. Do not look at him, — do not speak to him, — never see him again. Have pity upon him and upon me. Never come to our house again; absence, perhaps, will cure him. If it does not cure him, I do not know what I shall do to keep from dying of grief."

Madam Thierry's voice was stifled with sobs; and these sobs telling so eloquently of the sincerity of her grief, fell upon Julie's heart like a blow. Her dream of happiness, — must it not vanish before this maternal despair? The delicious reverie by which she had been lulled to forgetfulness, was it not a fantastic delusion, at which she herself would smile as soon as she crossed the threshold of her hotel? Had she really resolved to forsake the world forever, and throw herself into the arms of a man whom she had just seen for the first time? It was absurd to think of such a thing; and Madam Thierry was a thousand times right in regarding it as impossible. Julie made an effort to enter into her state of feeling, and to throw off her momentary infatuation; but the charm of that moment of madness must have been potent indeed, for the idea of submitting again to reason seemed to rend her heart; and, instead of replying to the poor mother with dignity and good sense, — instead of trying to

reassure her, — she threw herself into her arms, and, like her, burst into tears.

Madam Thierry was so surprised by these tears, that she felt as if she would go frantic. She dared not ask the countess to explain her emotion, and, moreover, she had no time to do so; Julien and Marcel entered.

"Come, my dear mother," Julien said, "you are crying altogether too much. You have forgotten to thank Madam d'Estrelle, I am sure, and to arrange your plans. Marcel has just told me that you must express your gratitude to M. Thierry in person, and that you must go to-morrow to his house, so as —"

Julie had turned her face to the window, and was trying to conceal and dry her tears without attracting observation; Julien, who had been watching her, saw at this moment what she was about. He repressed a cry, and involuntarily took a step towards her. Marcel, who perceived the strange agitation of the two women, and who could only suppose that Madam Thierry was suffering from a nervous attack, and had said something to agitate the countess, took up Julien's interrupted sentence, so as to renew the conversation.

"Yes, yes," he said; "we must go to-morrow, so as to witness the baptism of —"

Marcel was like Julien; he remained with his eyes fixed and mouth open, unable to articulate another word; for, happening to glance, not upon Julie, but upon the plant that he was about to name, he saw it reduced to a cluster of bulbs and a broken stem, damp with the sap oozing slowly forth, and falling in great drops, like tears.

"Where is it?" he cried, stupefied. "What have you done with it? Great God, Julien, what have you done with the *Antonia?*"

No one replied. Madam Thierry looked at Julien; he gazed steadily at Madam d'Estrelle, while Madam d'Estrelle, who was ignorant of the whole affair, did not know what to think of the lawyer's strange alarm.

"What are you looking for?" she said, rising. And, as she rose, the *Antonia*, which, when she had been

left alone in the studio, she had taken from the vase and placed tenderly upon her lap, fell at her feet.

Madam Thierry understood at once the real state of the case. Marcel was not so clear-sighted.

"Ah, madam," he cried, "to any one else who had caused this accident, I should say that she had ruined us! But what can I say to you? And, after all, why need we be afraid of the consequences of your act? Uncle Antoine will never visit his anger upon you! You did not know what you were doing; Julien did not tell you!"

"Undoubtedly," said Madam Thierry, "Julien explained nothing to our benefactress; but she must see for herself that every one in this house is not reasonable, and that, while wishing to serve us, she runs the risk of aggravating our sorrows —"

"It is you, mother, who are not reasonable," cried Julien, vehemently. "Really, I do not understand you to-day! You are too much excited; your words betray your thoughts. It seems to me, that instead of thanking Madam d'Estrelle, you have been imparting to her absurd fancies —"

Julien scolded his mother, who began to cry again. Marcel, seeing Madam d'Estrelle's astonishment, took her apart, and in three words gave her the key to the mystery, and at the same time the palpable proof, as it were, of the young artist's ardent passion. Deeply moved at first, she collected her strength, and recovered her presence of mind, to avert the blow that threatened the family.

"Leave it all to me," she said to Madam Thierry, with assumed cheerfulness; "I will take everything upon myself; it was I who committed the fault, and it is my duty, therefore, to repair it."

"The fault! what fault?" cried Julien.

"Yes, yes; I took a fancy to the flower and begged you for it. No! that is not it; how dull I am! It was I who picked it, yes, — a foolish fancy in a moment of abstraction! — You were not here. I am near-sighted, awkward! I will explain it all to your uncle.

Mon Dieu! what do you suppose he will do? He will not beat me. He is not so wicked!"

"Alas!" said Madam Thierry, "unfortunately he is very wicked when he is offended; and if he knew that Julien had committed this sacrilege —"

"It really was Julien, then?" said Marcel, astounded in his turn. "It is incomprehensible!"

"Certainly it was I, and I alone," replied Julien; "there is nothing strange in that —"

"You are mistaken!" said Marcel, in a low voice, perceiving, at last, the real cause of the misfortune. "You are too audacious, my lad; and you must have become both heartless and frivolous, to have sacrificed thus your mother's future, and your own, without mentioning that Madam d'Estrelle is too good, and ought rather to have put you in your right place."

"Silence, Marcel, silence!" said Julien. "You do not know what you are talking about; you do not understand —"

"I understand only too well," said Marcel; "and, on my honor, I am like your mother now, — I say that you have lost your senses —"

This dialogue was carried on in the recess of the window, where Marcel had led Julien, while the two ladies stood together by the despoiled vase, talking in low voices, and without well knowing what they were saying. Madam Thierry tried mechanically to plant anew the stem of the decapitated lily, and Madam d'Estrelle sought to console her in vain, for her greatest trouble was not the loss of the *Antonia*, but rather the storm of passion that had led to its loss. Suddenly Julien, who was in the habit of watching the curtain, and glancing at the crevice through which he saw into the garden, started violently. Seizing Marcel by the arm, and motioning him to be silent, he said in a whisper, —

"Be quiet, for the love of God! Some one is listening."

IV.

SOME one was listening, in fact, and it was too late to be silent. Uncle Antoine had heard everything. How he came to be spying about in Madam d'Estrelle's garden, we shall soon learn. Marcel followed Julien's eye, saw the crevice in the curtain, and, leaning forward in his turn, saw Croquimitaine on the watch. He left the window, and warned Madam d'Estrelle. For a moment, they talked in pantomime. They had not yet decided what to do, when Antoine, no longer hearing their voices, struck at the garden door.

This arrival was something like that of the statue in Don Giovanni. Julien was going promptly to open the door, when Madam d'Estrelle remembered that her presence might give rise to some ridiculous scene, and that her absence would, without any fail, be made the occasion of a stormy outbreak. She determined upon her course in an instant: detained Julien, by authoritatively laying her hand upon his arm, and signing to him and the others not to move, went into the hall, opened the door herself, and stood face to face with M. Antoine. Although he had prepared his part, he was a little surprised, — he who imagined that he was going to surprise every one.

"What — you, M. Antoine!" said Julie, pretending to be perfectly astonished. "What are you doing here? You came back to the hotel, then? Who told you where I was? and what put it into your head to cross my garden?"

Without waiting for his answer, she took the horticulturist's arm and led him quite a distance from the pavilion, to the edge of a little lake in the centre of the lawn fronting the hotel.

"But — I was going to the pavilion," stammered M. Antoine.

"I suppose so, since I found you at the door."

"I was going — with very good intentions; but — "

"Who doubts it? Certainly not I, my friend."

"Ah! Now you talk as I want to have you! So — you would like to talk to me alone, — I see, — it is just the same with me; I want to tell you about an idea that I have — "

"Sit down upon this bench, my neighbor, I will listen to you; but, first of all, you must hear me, for I have a confession to make."

"All right — I know what it is; you have picked my lily?"

"Ah, *mon Dieu!* How did you know that?"

"I heard a few words, and I guessed the rest. Why did you break the poor flower? Could you not have asked me for it? Could you not have waited until to-morrow? I intended to give it to you."

"But — supposing I did not do it on purpose?"

"You did not do it on purpose?"

Julie felt that she was blushing, for Antoine was looking at her attentively, and the expression of irony in his little black eyes was at the same time bitter and tender.

"No indeed," she answered, hoping to save herself by a Jesuitical device; "the accident happened against my will!"

"Good, good!" replied Antoine, who was still gazing searchingly into her face; "say that, — I prefer that."

"You prefer that, — what?"

"Yes, *mordie!* Come, abandon the bad cause that you want to plead. Condemn, frankly, the folly and treachery of Master Julien, and leave me to punish him as he deserves."

"But what makes you think that M. Julien? — "

"Ah, do not try to lie," cried M. Antoine, starting up with a bound, his little body quivering with passion and indignation; "it does not suit you to lie; you do not know how! And, besides, it is useless; I tell you that I heard, and, as I am not a fool, I have come to the conclusion —— Julien finds you to his liking; and the rascal would like to tell you so, if he dared!"

"Monsieur Thierry, what are you saying?"

"What am I saying? — I am stating things as they

are. Mademoiselle de Meuil was as proud as you can be; my brother André told her his fine stories, and ended by making himself understood. All men and all women are of the same clay! Come, acknowledge the truth; do you like Julien or not, — yes or no?"

"Monsieur Thierry, if I did not know your good heart, the disagreeable tone of your conversation would disgust me! Please to speak differently, or I will leave you."

"Oh, now you are angry! You remember your pride, and are going to turn your back upon me. Why? It is not your affair! Julien has committed a folly, — let him pay the penalty."

"No, Monsieur Thierry, it was my fault, — I am the unfortunate cause of the accident; if I had not admired and praised the flower indiscreetly, — he considered himself obliged to offer it to me, — politeness — "

"Bad reasons, bad reasons, my beautiful lady! The scoundrel knew perfectly well that I would have thrown the flower, the plant, the garden, and the gardener into the bargain, at your feet. If he did not know it, he ought to have guessed it; and, anyhow, he had no right to play the generous with my property; it was a rape, an abuse of confidence, and a theft. He may eat his fingers for the rest of his life; and his mother will learn what it costs to have brought up a son to play the courtier improperly with great ladies."

"Oh, my neighbor," cried Madam d'Estrelle, in great distress, and quite out of patience, "you are not going to withdraw your favor from them; you are not going to make it seem as if I had lied, — I, who placed you upon a pedestal; you are not going to break the bond of friendship that we formed to-day? For a flower more or less in your collection, you would not cause so much unhappiness? You are too rich to be troubled by a loss that can so easily be repaired."

"It is easy for you to talk! There are some things that millions cannot replace; which a man of taste regards as altogether priceless."

"Ah, *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* Who could have supposed such a thing?"

"Julien knew it."

"No, it is impossible!"

"I tell you that he knew it."

"Then he is crazy: but it is not his mother's fault; she was not there."

"It is his mother's fault. She encourages him to love you, she fawns upon you, so as to lead you to sacrifice yourself, as she did for her husband."

"No! I swear to you that you are mistaken, Monsieur Thierry! She is desperate —"

"About what? Ah! you acknowledge that she has talked to you about it, and that you know the feelings of the young man."

Madam d'Estrelle struggled in vain. All the prudence of her sex, all the pride of her rank, all her natural tact and knowledge of the world were shipwrecked, as it were, upon the brutal, straightforward logic of the old man. She was caught in a vise; and felt ashamed, awkward, unmasked, without resources. What should she do? order him out of her presence, and have done forever with this rude vulgarian, and his odious questions? But that would be abandoning the cause of the poor Thierrys, and giving them up to his vengeance; she felt that she ought rather to restrain her indignation, defend herself as well as she could, and submit to being humiliated by his most misplaced admonitions.

"It seems," she said, with mélancholy resignation, "that I committed a great fault in going to the pavilion, and yet my intention was most innocent. I had never seen M. Julien Thierry, I was overjoyed by your generous promises, and went to make the heart of his poor mother glad; I am well punished for having been so enthusiastic about you, M. Thierry, since you think you have a right to scold me, and to demand an explanation of the most innocent, if not the wisest, step that one woman ever took for the benefit of another."

"And who says that I blame you?" replied M. Antoine, at the same time softened and irritated by her appeal; "I condemn no one, except the real culprits. Do you know what would have happened, if I had entered suddenly,

when Master Julien was breaking my lily? I should have broken him. Yes, as truly as I tell you so, I would have done it. Here is a cane that would have split his painter's head for him."

The old man's wicked and excited expression alarmed Madam d'Estrelle; really afraid of him, she looked around involuntarily, as if to seek protection in case she should become the object of his rage. Just then there was a tremulous movement in the thick foliage surrounding the bench; it was only, perhaps, a bird hopping about amid the branches, but she felt a vague sense of security.

"No, M. Antoine," she resumed, with courageous gentleness, "you will never make me believe that you are a wicked man, or that you would behave cruelly to any one. You must blame me alone for this accident. Scold me, — you have a right to do so. I will promise you what I have already promised myself, that I will never again enter the pavilion. What can I do more? Come, tell me!"

At this moment the foliage stirred a little more violently, and Julien's tame sparrow, like a messenger sent from him to implore her pardon, came and lighted upon Madam d'Estrelle's shoulder. Moved by this trifling incident more than she cared to acknowledge, she took the friendly little animal in the hollow of her hand, with a sort of tenderness.

"Hum!" said M. Antoine, whose piercing eyes seemed to possess the power of divination. "That is a strange companion! Does it belong to you?"

"Yes," replied Julie, who feared that his vengeance against Julien would fall upon the poor bird, if he knew that it was his.

"A tame sparrow! It is an ugly beast, and one that does a great deal of mischief. If it were not yours — Did Julien give it to you?"

"There again! You think of nothing but Julien!" cried Madam d'Estrelle, losing patience, "and I really cannot understand the strange turn that our conversation has taken. I am very sorry that I went to the

pavilion; I regret exceedingly the accident that has occurred. How can I repair it? Will you not tell me that, instead of wounding me with all these unjust insinuations?"

"Do you wish me to tell you?"

"Yes! did I not promise to go to a family festival at your house to-morrow?"

"The baptism of my poor *Antonia?* That is done with. The child is dead, or at least disfigured. I must invite my guests to a burial. And, besides, it no longer suits me to invite Madam André, and to pretend to be friendly with her son — at least, unless — "

Madam d'Estrelle imagined that the rich man had repented of his munificence, and wanted, perhaps, to reduce the sum that he had offered for the pavilion.

"Speak, speak!" she cried eagerly; "I will agree to anything that can make you amends and console you."

There was no limit to M. Antoine's vanity. He had seen Madam d'Ancourt an hour before, and she, out of spite against Julie, had inflamed his imagination, and encouraged him in his audacious hopes. He had returned, intending to offer himself. Not finding Julie in the drawing-room, he had been so bold as to follow her into the garden. The incident of the broken lily hurried forward the inevitable event. His folly had reached a climax, — he declared himself.

"Madam," he said, "you drive me to the point, with your pretty words and sweet manners; if you are offended at what I say, it is your own fault. Consider a little! You are not rich, and I know that you were not born upon the steps of a throne. I do not consider you proud, either, since you go to the studio of an insignificant painter, and accept his homage, — at my expense! A ridiculous story! but no matter. Laugh at it, but let us end by being reasonable. Julien has good ancestors upon his mother's side, but he is my nephew, nevertheless: — he is a plebeian. Do you despise him for that?"

"No, certainly!"

"His fault, then, is that he is poor? But suppose

he was rich, very rich, — come, what would you say to him then?"

"You want to give him a fortune, so that I may marry him?" said Madam d'Estrelle, in a sort of stupor of amazement.

"Who said anything of the kind?"

"Excuse me, — I thought —"

"You thought that I was making you a very silly proposition. What does an artist amount to? Suppose I should give him a fortune, would the money I have earned elevate him in your eyes? Those who have carved out their own destiny, who have shown that they deserve respect by the talent they have displayed in business, are the ones who deserve consideration. Come, you understand me perfectly well. I am offering you a good man, a large fortune, and a name that has made some noise in the world; a man who will fulfil all your wishes during his life, and will leave you all his property after his death; a man who has neither mistresses, nor illegitimate children, nor cares, nor responsibilities of any kind; and, finally, a man who will be your grandfather, and whom no one will accuse you of selecting out of caprice and gallantry. You will show your good sense and delicacy, on the contrary, by choosing him, for you have debts, — more debts than property; and, if Marcel calculates well, he cannot give you much encouragement. Reflect, therefore! If you say no, you will be certain to meet with great misfortunes, while every one will honor you for freeing yourself from your embarrassments by a reasonable marriage. You seem to be very much surprised; and yet your friend the baroness gave you to understand — but she did not tell you the amount, perhaps?"

"Five millions, is it not?" said Julie, who had grown pale and haughty. "You are the person to whom she referred, and you are speaking of yourself?"

"What if I am? Does the idea shock you? Does it offend you?"

"No, Monsieur Thierry," replied Julie, with a su-

preme effort; "I feel very much honored by your offer, but—"

"But what? My age? Do you imagine that I want to play the lover? No, God be praised! I never had that weakness, and, at my age, I am not a fool. I want to be your father by contract; I want to marry you so that I may have the right to make you my heiress. Come, we have talked enough. You must say yes or no, for I am not a man to be kept in suspense, and I do not want to be humiliated. Do you understand?"

M. Antoine spoke with singular authority. Julie was afraid that a refusal would exasperate him.

"You are too hasty," she replied; "my character is undecided and timid. You must give me time for reflection."

"Then — you do not say no?" replied the old man, evidently flattered at being allowed to hope.

"I do not say anything," replied Madam d'Estrelle, who had risen, and was approaching the house eagerly. "I am agitated, as you see, by an offer that I did not expect. Give me several days for reflection, for consideration, — I am deeply moved, deeply touched by your friendship; but I am alarmed, also, for I had sworn to remain free! Adieu, Monsieur Thierry, — leave me! I really need to be alone with my own heart; do not try and force me into a decision by your goodness."

Julie escaped into an inner room, and uncle Antoine left the hotel. Devoured by a fever of hope that made him more insane than ever, he forgot the pavilion, the lily, the picture: he forgot everything; but when he found himself in the rue de Babylone, in front of the pavilion, he was seized by a furious desire to torment, puzzle, and bewilder his relatives. He rang, and was admitted by Marcel, who was waiting to learn the result of his conference with Julie.

"So, here you are!" he said, abruptly. "Where is my plant? Has Master Julien finished my picture?"

"Come into the studio," said Marcel; "the picture is finished, and your lily is as fresh as if nothing had happened."

"Oh, of course!" muttered Antoine, ironically; "it has done it good to be broken."

He came into the studio with his hat on; his sister-in-law, with a sad countenance, and in a very dejected attitude, was seated upon her little cane-chair in the recess of the window; without seeeing her, without glancing around, he went straight up to his lily, examined the fracture, and gazed eagerly at the stalk, which continued to bloom in the damp earth. Then he looked at the portrait of the *Antonia*, and turning to Julien, said, —

"I like it very much; but you sha'n't have my custom, for all that."

He walked up and down the studio, passed before Madam Thierry, saw her at last, and put his hand to his hat, saying, in a surly tone, "Your servant, madam!"

Returning to Marcel, he laughed in his face, like a crazy man, without uttering a word; and finally, furious because he could not find any way of revenging himself that would not deprive him of his fiancée's good opinion, he rushed to the door. Marcel, who saw what he was suffering, drew him back.

"Come, uncle," he said, "we must know how we stand! Has the Countess d'Estrelle obtained our pardon, or must I sell my practice to pay damages?"

"The Countess d'Estrelle," replied the old man, "is a prudent person, who knows the difference between hair-brained fools and a sensible man. You will see the proof of it some day."

Madam Thierry, who could not endure her brother-in-law's insolence, and who thought he intended to insult her, arose to go to her room. Antoine bowed slightly, and continued, —

"I did not mean that for you, Madam André, I have nothing at all to say to you! —"

"And I have nothing at all to say to you," replied the widow, in a tone of disdainful bitterness, which she was not prudent enough to repress.

Julien, incapable of humiliating himself by making excuses, devoured his indignation in silence, and Marcel

followed the embarrassed and disordered movements of the horticulturist with a piercing eye.

"What is the matter, uncle?" he said, when Madam Thierry had left the room. "You are hatching out something, good or bad! Be sensible, and tell the truth."

"Oh, the truth, the truth! that is what you want!" replied M. Antoine; "the truth will be seen and known when the day and hour comes! Every one, perhaps, will not find it a laughing matter!"

Julien, who was still painting, lost patience; laying down his pallette and maul-stick, and taking off the handkerchief rolled carelessly around his head (painters, at that time, wore this head-dress in their studios instead of caps), he went straight up to his uncle, and, forcing him to interrupt his restless and noisy walk, demanded, seriously and firmly, an explanation of his vague threats.

"Uncle," he said, "you are acting as if you wished to drive me to extremities, but I shall not forget the respect I owe you. I beg you, however, to remember that I am not a child, to be frightened by a frown and loud talking. It would be better for all, if you would see and understand the real state of the case; that is to say, the real grief that I feel at having displeased you. Do not ask me how this misfortune occurred; a moment's forgetfulness, a fit of absence of mind, cannot be explained; since it has occurred, what is to be my punishment, or what do you wish me to do in expiation? I am ready to prove my repentance, or submit to the consequences of my fault. Decide, and stop threatening; it will be more worthy of both of us."

M. Antoine stood perfectly still, and tried to look indifferent; but, in reality, he was very much mortified, for he could not deny that the accused occupied a much more dignified position, at this moment, than the judge. He felt afraid, also, that he had been making himself ridiculous; and, at his wit's end, he formed a diabolical plan, and resolved to carry it out.

"Everything depends upon Madam d'Estrelle," he said; "I will do all that I promised for your mother, and will pardon you as well, in spite of your villanous con-

duct, if she desires and commands it; but I will only do this on condition that she keeps her word, and comes to-morrow to my house, with your family."

"Very well," said Marcel; "if it is all arranged, why did not you remind her of the appointment just now?"

"I am not talking to you, lawyer," replied Antoine, "be so good as to take yourself off; I want to talk to master Julien alone."

"Talk to your heart's content," said Marcel; "I am glad enough to go, for they have been expecting me at my house for more than an hour. I will return after a while, and find out what you have decided."

When Julien was alone with his uncle, the latter assumed a solemn manner, that was even more comical than his previous rage.

"Listen!" he said; "I want you to do an errand for me. You must go to the hotel d'Estrelle."

"Excuse me, uncle, I cannot go there. I should not be admitted."

"I know perfectly well that you would not be admitted. But you can carry a letter there; you can wait for the reply in the ante-chamber, and bring it back to me."

"Very well," said Julien, who thought he would stop at the porter's lodge. "Where is the letter?"

"Give me writing materials."

"Here they are," said Julien, opening the drawer of his table.

The horticulturist sat down, and wrote rapidly. Julien changed his working-dress for a coat which was lying upon a chair, and tried to conceal his impatience by so doing. Soon his uncle called him.

"Do you want a seal?" said Julien.

"Not yet. You must correct my note. I do not pride myself upon being learned, and I may have made mistakes in orthography. Read it: read it aloud, and then correct the points, the commas, — everything."

Julien, who suspected some trick, cast a rapid glance over the few lines which his uncle had written in a bold hand. A mist passed before his eyes, and he came very

near crushing the paper with indignation; but he imagined that this whimsical and extravagant old man had written this letter only so as to make him betray his secret. He restrained himself, therefore, met the scrutinizing gaze fastened ferociously upon him without blenching, and read the contents of the note with a firm voice:

"MADAME AND FRIEND,—

"We were so confused at our last interview, that we parted without coming to an understanding about our arrangements for to-morrow. I will not conceal from you that your presence at my little fête will give me new hope, and that I shall consider your absence as the sign of a breach between us, or an unfortunate delay of your decision. I have told you that I did not wish to be trifled with, and you have promised me to be sincere. Night brings wisdom. I shall depend upon to-morrow to confirm the hopes you have allowed me to entertain.

"Your friend and servant, who is impatient to call himself your fiancé,

"ANTOINE THIERRY."

"Very well," replied the horticulturist, when Julien had finished reading it, "are there any faults?"

"Yes, uncle, a great many," said Julien, quietly taking his pen.

"Softly! Don't let the corrections be seen. Be careful!"

"It is all done. Seal it, and write the address."

"What do you think of it?" said his uncle, writing Madam d'Estrelle's name upon the envelope.

"Nothing at all," replied Julien. "I don't believe you will send it."

"Will you believe so if you take the letter?"

"Yes."

"What will you say then?"

"Nothing. It is not my affair."

"*Diantre!* it is as much your affair as mine!"

"How so, pray?"

"The recovery and deed of gift of your house at Sèvres depend upon it."

"Very well, uncle. I thank you, then, with all my heart."

"You have an expression —"

"I have no expression at all. Look at me!"

Antoine could not meet Julien's bold and penetrating glance.

"Come! be quick!" he said, ill-naturedly; "carry my letter."

"I fly to do so," replied Julien.

He took his hat.

"Where shall I bring you the answer?"

"I will wait for you in the street, at the door of the hotel, and you can bring it to me there; we will go out together."

They left the house. Julien went straight to the porter's lodge, his uncle keeping him in sight; but, instead of giving the letter to the porter, as he had intended doing at first, he informed him that he wished to speak to the valet-de-chambre, and crossed the court rapidly. When he reached the ante-chamber, he gave his message; and, like a man who does not expect to be admitted, sat down on a bench to wait; he said to the valet, however, —

"Inform the countess that there is a reply, and that the nephew of M. Antoine Thierry is here to carry it to him."

After a moment's delay, the valet returned and said, —

"The countess would like to ask you a few questions, be so good as to come this way."

He opened a side door, and led the way. Julien followed him into a dark hall; the valet opened another door leading into a large apartment, brought a chair, and retired.

Julien found himself in a beautiful dining-room, opposite the principal door. In another moment this door opened, and Madam d'Estrelle entered. She looked pale and agitated.

"I receive you in this room," she said, "because I

have company in the drawing-room, and I cannot refer to the subject that brings you here, before others. Did M. Antoine give you this letter?"

"Yes, madam."

"You have not read it, of course?"

"I have, madam."

"And you undertook the commission?"

"Yes, madam."

"Why so?"

"To find out whether my uncle is a fool, who ought to be under lock and key, or whether he is atrociously wicked."

"In other words, — you were not sure, — you wished to find out, — whether I had given him the right to send me such a letter?"

"I did not suppose such a thing possible, and I took it for granted that you would send me away without an answer."

"And since I receive you, — you conclude —"

"Nothing, madam, excepting that it is unnecessary cruelty to keep me in suspense."

"Why should you feel such an interest? — What account do I owe to you —?"

"Ah, madam, do not speak in that tone," cried Julien, almost beside himself. "Either you have disregarded the antipathy that you must feel for such a man, on account of my uncle's wealth, — and in that case I have absolutely nothing to say, — or you have endured his insolent offer with a patience that has deceived him; and, if this is so, I can easily understand the cause of your patience, — your goodness. You were afraid that M. Antoine would visit his resentment upon us."

"It is true, M. Julien: I thought of your mother, and avoided making a reply; I asked time for reflection; I hoped that, to please me, he would keep his word, and restore Madam Thierry to comfort and happiness. It was wrong, perhaps, for I am naturally sincere, and I failed to be so in this case. But how could I suppose that this violent and ill-mannered old man would begin by trying to compromise me? And yet he has done so,

and God only knows what will be the end of this disagreeable affair! But I ought not to think about that. Since my negotiations in your favor have failed, it is selfish in me to complain of my own troubles. In fact, I regret more than anything else that I shall no longer be able to serve you, after being the cause of a great disaster. What is to be done with a man who mistakes my fear for coquetry, and my silence for an avowal?"

Julien fell upon his knees; and, as Madam d'Estrelle, alarmed and surprised, was about to fly, he said, —

"Don't be afraid, madam; this is not a theatrical declaration; I am not a madman, and I am performing a serious duty in thanking you, upon my knees, in my mother's name. Gratitude for such goodness as yours must be expressed, not by words, but by adoration. Now," added Julien, rising, "I must also tell you that I am a man, and that I should despise myself if my love, even for the most tender of mothers, could induce me to accept the sacrifice that you propose. No, madam, no. You must show no consideration for M. Antoine Thierry; you must not allow him to suppose, for an instant longer, that he can aspire, — poor man! he is a fool; but fools must be held in check, like troublesome and badly behaved children. I will undertake this duty, and I will go at once, with your permission, to disabuse him forever."

"Ah, *mon Dieu*, you yourself?" said Julie. "No! do not drive him to desperation, I will write —"

"And for my part," replied Julien, proudly, and with a burst of passion that did not displease Madam d'Estrelle, "I will not allow you to write. Do you suppose that I am such a child as to be afraid of his anger, or so great a coward as to allow you to be exposed to his importunities? Do you think that my mother, any more than myself, would accept favors that would cost you the shadow of a falsehood? We would give our lives to save you from the least suffering; and is it your place to suffer and to be persecuted for us? No, madam, understand us better. My mother's sentiments are as noble as your own; it was with the greatest reluctance that she agreed to accept M. Antoine's assistance. At present, she would

blush to do so; she will abhor the thought of his benefits, when she knows what they would cost you. As for me, I am nothing, and will never be anything in your life; but let a man, speaking from his heart, assure you that he has no fear, either of poverty, or vengeance, or any sort of persecution. I have done my duty, and will continue to do it; I will support my mother until her last breath; I would fight with the universe, if it were necessary, for her sake. Do not be troubled, therefore, about her fate, you who love her so well. If she had nothing else, she would prefer your friendship to all M. Antoine's wealth. For my part, it is enough for me to have been allowed the privilege of telling you 'I love you' in this one moment of my life, without offending you and without seeming insane: this recollection will always make me proud and happy; I am speaking to your soul, and there is no feeling in my heart that is not worthy of you. Adieu, madam! Live happy and tranquil; and if you ever want some task performed that others find impossible, remember there is a man living who will do it, — a man poor, humble, unknown, but able to move mountains; for, when he is striving for his mother or for you, he is will, — he is faith in person."

Without seeking or waiting for an answer, Julien went out, and was in the street in the twinkling of an eye. Antoine was waiting for him with feverish impatience; he was just about rushing into the house like a bomb-shell, when Julien reappeared.

"So you have come!" he cried; "the answer must be at least four pages long. Where is it?"

"Come a little farther off, monsieur," replied Julien, taking his arm, and leading him across the street; "there is so much noise here, that we cannot hear our own voices."

They went into an open lot, where there was a placard bearing the inscription, — "*Land for sale.*" Julien continued, —

"Madam d'Estrelle read your letter, uncle, and having done so, summoned me into her presence, and intrusted me with a verbal answer."

"Verbal?"

"And brief."

"What is it?"

"When you offered the countess your hand, she imagined that you were out of your senses, and was afraid of being alone with you; she promised to reflect, so as to get rid of you. In point of fact, she needed no time for reflection, and this is her answer: she regrets that she will be unable to come to your house to-morrow, and she sends you word that, from this time, she will not be at home when you call."

"Is she going away? Where is she going?"

"It is not my place to explain her message; you must understand it."

"Oh! it is my formal dismissal?"

"So it would seem."

"And she commissions you to inform me?"

"No; I undertook to do so without asking her consent."

"Why so, — I should like to know."

"You already know, monsieur. Did you not tell me that my mother's fortune and mine depended upon the encouragement given by Madam d'Estrelle to your matrimonial hopes? It was for this reason that I seized so eagerly the excuse you gave me for going to her house; I hoped the strange character of your letter would induce her to grant me an interview. You did not foresee that?"

"On the contrary, *mordieu!*" cried M. Antoine; "I said to myself plainly, that that very thing would happen, if —"

"If what, sir?"

"If I had guessed correctly. I understand now."

"For my part, I do not understand."

"It is the same to me."

"Excuse me, will you allow me to guess? You imagined that I was such a fool, such a madman, such an impertinent fop, as to aspire to attract the attention of this lady?"

"And now I am sure of it! You have declared your

sentiments, — your triumphant manner tells me so! You are rubbing your hands with joy, to think that you have occasioned my defeat. You will tell the story to your dear mother! You will say to her, 'The rich man is cheated! He thought to throw us a morsel of bread, and take a young wife; he was going to turn us into ridicule, and disinherit us. Look at him! He has only succeeded in covering himself with shame. He will grow old alone, he will die an old bachelor, and, in spite of him, we shall be rich.'"

"You are mistaken, sir," replied Julien, with perfect self-possession; "I have never made any such ignoble calculations, and never will do so. You may marry to-morrow, if you choose, and marry whom you choose; I shall be delighted, provided that you do not compromise my dignity, and my mother's, in the transaction. I wished to have an opportunity of saying this to Madam d'Estrelle; I repeat it to you. And now I have only to recall that you are my uncle, and to take leave of you with due respect."

Julien bowed deeply to M. Antoine, and was turning away. The latter called him back imperiously.

"And my lily?" he cried, "who will pay me for that?"

"Name the price, sir."

"Five hundred thousand francs."

"Are you talking seriously?"

"You ask me whether I am talking seriously?"

"I believe you, knowing that you would be incapable of deceiving any one who trusts you."

"Base flattery!"

The face of the young artist flushed; he looked steadily at M. Antoine, and tried to pursuade himself that he was so insane that a man in his senses ought not to mind his invectives. Antoine read his thought, and tried to be more calm.

"No matter for that," he said, "let it pass. I will go take the ruin and the picture; my loss is the price that I must pay for my goodness and confidence; it will teach me to be true, hereafter, to my own ideas and principles. Lead the way, and not another word!"

They returned to the studio. Silent as personified spite, M. Antoine took up the plant, the broken stalk, and the picture, and, without allowing any one to help him, without looking at Julien or moving his lips, he left the pavilion never to enter it again.

Marcel soon returned, to learn what had happened; and Julien, with frank sincerity, told him everything in Madam Thierry's presence.

"Now," he added, "I know that my thoughtless conduct has caused you great anxiety. You have thought me as foolish as uncle Antoine, and my mother is frightened about a sentiment that she imagines will be fatal to me. Undeceive yourself, and recover your tranquillity, dear mother; and you, Marcel, give me back the respect to which I am entitled, as a reasonable man. One can be so, in spite of committing an imprudence; and I acknowledge that I was very thoughtless in offering our benefactress an object that did not belong to me. It was a misplaced outburst of gratitude, but she was not shocked, because she saw that my feeling was worthy of her, and was perfectly respectful. I flatter myself that she is more than ever persuaded of this, since granting me an interview, and I swear to both of you, by everything that is most sacred, — by filial love and faithful friendship, — that there shall be nothing in my future conduct by which Madam d'Estrelle can be annoyed, or you afflicted. Do not regret the house at Sèvres, my dear mother; we can do without it! At all events, you don't want Madam d'Estrelle to become Madam Antoine Thierry for the sake of obtaining it, and you certainly don't suppose that such a thing could have happened. As for you, my dear Marcel, I thank you for all the trouble you have taken; but you must be thoroughly convinced that your efforts are thrown away, and that uncle Antoine will never give anything without an equivalent. Let us be composed, and resume the course of life which this bad dream of fortune interrupted. I have still my hands to work with, and a heart with which to cherish you; and believe me, from to day I shall be more active,

more courageous, and surer of the future than ever before."

Julien was speaking the truth, and not making a display of courage to reassure his mother. Although far from being tranquil, he felt strong: his two interviews with Julie, succeeding each other so rapidly, had given a new direction to his thoughts, — a new impulse to his soul.

Inspired by her presence, he had expressed, unexpectedly and without premeditation, his noble and devoted passion. He was sure that he had opened his heart to her freely, and that she had neither been alarmed nor offended. Did he believe that she loved him? No; but he felt vaguely, perhaps, that she did, and his heart was thrilled with a mysterious ecstasy. Naturally inclined to an ideal enthusiasm and self-sacrifice, he did not shrink from the part that he felt called upon to perform. What he had said, he meant to do, and he was strong enough to do it. To love in silence, — to hope, seek, strive but for one thing, — the opportunity of proving his devotion, — this was his plan, his will, his confession of faith, as it were.

"I may have to suffer a great deal for the present," he thought; "but it will give me so much joy to suffer nobly, and hide my love for her sake, that I shall rise above my misery, and my mother will no longer be afflicted. In the struggle between my passions and duties, I must be really great. And why not? I have always loved noble aspirations and elevated sentiments, and ought, therefore, to be equal to the trial. Since I am a man, and believe we can best fulfil our duties in a domestic life, I suppose I shall do some day as Marcel has done: marry a good woman, who thenceforth will be my best friend. Up to that time, I will live free and pure. This noble Julie, who can never be mine, I will love without hope, and, if possible, without desire; I will love her with a sublime, fraternal friendship, and will seek inspiration in this sentiment. Others will regard me merely as a gentle, patient artist, seeking grace and bloom in baskets of roses; but, by studying the divine

mystery of purity in the bosom of flowers, one may learn to comprehend the sanctity of love. It seems to me that there is something great in being able to say to yourself that you might seek to win a beloved woman, and love her too well to wish to do so. My life will be one of meditation and sentiment, and to this life I will be true as long as possible. I will live in my thoughts as others do in their acts, and perhaps I shall be happier than any one else. My enthusiasm will not be wasted upon delusions. I shall live in constant communion with the beautiful, the pure, the great: more fortunate in this than my poor father, who felt this longing, and thought to satisfy it by external luxury, and the society of distinguished people, I shall not require so much; and, asking only the approval of my conscience, shall really be richer than he."

In casting himself thus, of his own accord, into the regions of the ideal, Julien obeyed a secret inclination that had been developed in him at an early day. He had received an excellent education, and had not only studied his art with enthusiasm, but had read a great deal. His severe enthusiasm would not allow him to enjoy all subjects indiscriminately, or to take pleasure in every style. Among all the authors who had nourished his youth, the great Corneille was the one whom he had read with the most satisfaction and benefit. It was in his works that he had found the noblest aspirations, the most heroic sentiments, clothed in the most elevated forms. He preferred his teachings displayed in action, — the picture that he presented of great virtues embodied in living characters, — to the discussions of contemporaneous philosophy.

We do not mean that he disdained the spirit of his age, or held himself aloof from the prodigious movement that was going on at that time in ideas. On the contrary, he was one of the robust products of this epoch, so unique in history for its grand illusions, leading the way to formidable resolutions. The last days of the monarchy had come, but very few persons were thinking of overthrowing it. Julien, at least, was not among the number who

cherished this dream. He was far enough from attempting any enterprise whatever of a political nature. For his part, he was intoxicated by the discoveries and dreams of moral science and of natural science, recently extricated in great blocks, as it were, from the quarries of the past. Legrange, Bailly, Lalande, Berthollet, Monge, Condorcet, Lavoisier, had already revolutionized thought. When we glance at the rapid succession of fortunate efforts that, in a few years, had transformed astrology into astronomy, alchemy into chemistry, and, along the whole line of human knowledge, had replaced blind prejudice by experimental analysis, it is impossible to deny that the philosophers of the eighteenth century, in warring against superstition, had freed individual genius from its fetters, as well as the religious and social conscience of peoples. And what audacity, what enthusiasm, what intoxication in these first flights towards the future! The human mind had just saluted the sun of progress, and already imag ined that it had taken possession of all its rays. The first montgolfière balloon had scarcely risen upon its wings of fire, when two men ventured to cross the channel. At once humanity cried, "We are masters of the atmosphere, we are inhabitants of heaven!"

At the very time when our story chances to occur, the new idea of the age, just starting in its noble career, had been summed up in the word *perfectibility*. Condorcet had made a magnificent outline of the doctrine, and, without allowing for human weakness, urged its infinite destiny. He believed in the infinite to such an extent, that he even hoped to discover the secret for annihilating death itself, and all readers and thinkers were beginning to believe with him in the indefinite prolongation of physical life. Parmentier believed that he had exorcised forever the spectre of famine, by acclimating the potato. Mesmer thought that he had discovered a mysterious agent, the source of everything wonderful. Saint Martin announced the regeneration of the soul, and dissipated the terrors of the old dogmas with the dogma of infinite light. Cagliostro pretended to resuscitate magic in a natural and comprehensible manner. In a word, all

minds, the most practical as well as the most romantic, were intoxicated by the wildest dreams of the future, and, amid this over-excitement, the present seemed an obstacle quite unworthy of any notice. The old monarchy, the inflexible clergy, were still erect, and were endeavoring to seize again the power that was slipping from them; but liberty had just been inaugurated in America, and France felt that her day was near. No bloodshed was anticipated. Delightful chimeras excluded ideas of vengeance. Upon the eve of a terrible storm, the people rejoiced, and a mysterious fever of ideas prepared for the magnificent outburst of '89.

Julien was full of all that eager faith and resolution that seem to descend providentially upon the earth at periods preliminary to great conflicts; but there was a certain tranquillity about him, due to his habits, training, and also to his natural disposition. He could not have argued about it; but one of his marked characteristics was a philosophical mysticism, and a sort of inward necessity of sacrificing himself. If he had not loved a woman, he would have loved liberty with fanaticism. Love was revealed to him under the form of devotion. As soon as Julie's image filled his soul, he thought of himself merely as a force whose office was to serve and protect Julie. Did the idea occur to him that she might and ought to belong to him? Yes, undoubtedly, it occurred to him in a confused, and sometimes in an imperious manner; but he resisted it bravely. He had no prejudices, and was not like uncle Antoine, dazzled by the rank, title, and elegance of the countess; he knew Julie's mediocre birth, and the embarrassed state of her finances. He considered himself, moreover, her equal; for he was one of those men of the third estate, filled with a legitimate and obstinate pride, who were beginning to say, — *The third estate is everything;* as people said afterwards, — *The people is everything;* as some day — without rejecting any form of nobility, whether coming from the sword, the robe, the workshop, or the plough — they will say, — *The individual is everything.* Julien did not consider Madam d'Estrelle as a woman placed above him by cir-

cumstances, but by her personal merit. That merit he very probably exaggerated. It is the privilege of love to see the objects of its worship through the medium of the ideal, and to consider itself called upon to make conquests of divinities. Thus, an admirable humility and boundless pride were united in his passion.

"I am not worthy of such a woman," he said to himself; "I must become so: and when, by being patient, disinterested, devoted and respectful, I have made myself worthy of her, — ah, then, perhaps, I shall feel that I have the right to say, — 'Love me!'"

Sometimes he asked himself whether this day would come before Julie's life had been disposed of by the unexpected circumstances of the future; and to this doubt he answered, —

"Supposing that it is so, she will respect me, — perhaps will feel a friendship for me, — and the time I have consecrated to governing myself nobly, will not have been thrown away."

Madam Thierry, therefore, was both surprised and delighted to see that her son, from the very day of the great catastrophe, suddenly recovered his cheerfulness, and every appearance of moral and physical health.

"My friend," she said to Marcel, as she was talking with him alone, "I scarcely dare acknowledge what is in my mind; but he looks so happy! *Mon Dieu!* do you think it can be possible?"

"What?" said Marcel. "Oh, yes, — his visit to Madam d'Estrelle! There is no saying, my good aunt; he is handsome and amiable enough to please a great lady; but the countess is ruined, and can only be relieved from her embarrassments by a rich marriage. We ought to wish to see her well married, provided that her husband is not too old a man. She is not determined and courageous, as you were, and, besides, the step that succeeded in your case is usually a failure. An absorbing passion is a number that draws once out of a hundred thousand times in the lottery of destiny. Do not desire to see it tried, either by Julien or the countess."

"No, I do not wish anything of the kind; it is too

hazardous, in fact; but supposing she loves him: what will happen?"

"I do not know; but she is virtuous, and he is an honest man: they would both suffer. It would be better if they could be separated."

"That is what I said at first. And yet what a pity! They are both so beautiful, so young and so good! Ah! fate is sometimes very unjust! If my poor husband had left him our fortune, Julien would have been a good match for her, since she is poor, and has no family pride. Alas! God pardon me! This is the first time that I have ever blamed my André! Do not speak of it again, Marcel, — never again!"

"We must reflect, however," replied the lawyer, "and not allow the fire in Julien's heart to blaze too high; to-day it is an illumination, probably because he hopes; to-morrow will be the conflagration."

"What shall we do then, Marcel?"

"I don't know. I wish I could find out what Madam d'Estrelle feels, and, above all, learn about uncle Antoine; for I am not deceived by his pretended philosophy, and I fear —"

"What do you fear?"

"Everything! With such a man, what may we not expect?"

The emotions of this eventful day made Madam d'Estrelle almost ill. Julien's visit completely unnerved her; but, when he had gone, the sort of fever into which she had been thrown by M. Antoine's proposal, was succeeded by a languor that was not without sweetness.

"Every one would laugh at me," she said, "for feeling such confidence in the word of a man whom I have known only for a few hours; and yet I am certain that he is my friend, — my true friend. But ought I to accept this ardent friendship? Will it not be dangerous for him and for me? It is true that he did not ask me to accept it. He went away like a person who relies upon himself alone, and who loves without asking permission. Since he says that he has no hope, has he not the right to love? And how, indeed, could I prevent him?"

Julie knew perfectly well, in her own heart, that she ought not to have received Julien, after what Madam Thierry had told her of his feeling towards herself.

"In fact," she said, "why did I receive him when my first impulse was to send this simple and final message: — 'There is no answer!' That would have freed me both from the uncle and nephew. But did the latter deserve to be humiliated? Did he not come for the purpose of defending his honor from his uncle's contemptible trickeries? Had he not the right to tell me what he did upon this point? And if he added a few tender words, — too tender for his own good, perhaps, — was there anything to wound me in what he said? Is it my duty to be offended? I cannot tell. He offered himself, — he gave himself to me, — without seeking anything in return. He did not even give me time to answer him. Whether I wish it or not, he has made me a present of his heart and his life. Indeed, he did not talk like a lover, but like my slave, and at the same time my master. It is all very singular, and I cannot understand it. What I feel for him I do not know; but I am certain of one thing, and that is, that I believe in him."

It seemed to Julie, as well as to Madam Thierry and Marcel, that the morrow of this strange day would be marked by the most important events. They wondered, in vain, what M. Antoine's spite would induce him to do. To their surprise, a number of days passed, and no change occurred in their respective situations. The horticulturist had gone into the country, but no one knew where. He had no country-seat, at least so Marcel thought, but the lawyer was mistaken in supposing that he knew all about his affairs. When convinced that he was really absent, he became anxious. The people at his house, however, showed him orders written by his hand which the head gardener received every day, giving precise directions about the treatment of certain delicate plants. These horticultural bulletins had no date, and no postmark. They were brought by the valet-de-chambre of the ex-ship-owner, — an old sailor, throroughly incorruptible, devoted as a negro, silent as a log.

"What are we to think?" said Marcel to Madam Thierry; "he is probably in a great rage, or he may perhaps be ashamed of his folly, and feel like hiding for a while. Let us hope that he will return cured of his mania for matrimony, and that he will make it a point of honor not to break off his negotiations in regard to the pavilion. The indemnity will be of great service to you, and I cannot hide from you that Madam d'Estrelle is in great need of the sum that he promised her. I cannot imagine what venomous fly is stinging her creditors, but they are beginning to show the strangest impatience and anxiety. They have gone so far as to threaten that they will yield their claims to a principal creditor, who will certainly speculate upon the embarrassment of my client; nothing worse than that could happen."

A few days afterwards he had an interview with Madam d'Estrelle; her father-in-law was very ill, and she had just returned from paying him a visit.

"I am not at all easy," he said; "I fear that the marquis will die without settling your affairs."

"I do not count much upon his goodness," replied Julie, "but I cannot believe that he will leave me struggling with the count's creditors, when he can so easily put an end to my trials. We must make allowance for the childish fear that selfish old men feel of poverty! but after him—"

"After him?—" replied Marcel, "the devil is after him,—I mean is at his heels. His wife is a terrible woman. I am afraid of her. She does not love you; and, since your husband was not her son, you have no claims upon her."

"*Mon Dieu!* you see the dark side of everything, my dear lawyer! The marquis is neither very old nor very sick. He must have made his will. The marchioness is exceedingly devout, and she will do from a sense of duty what she would not do out of tenderness. Do not discourage me, you who have always sustained me."

"I should not be discouraged myself, if I could lay my hand upon my whimsical uncle. If he would buy and pay for the pavilion, we should gain a delay of one

or two months. We should have time to sell the little farm in *Beauvoises*, or to yield it at a moderate price; otherwise it will be seized brutally, and we shall lose altogether remnants of property which are still valuable."

Julie, formerly, had been very much troubled about her precarious position, but she was in a state of utter lassitude, at present, that took the place of courage. So much philosophy did she display, that Marcel was surprised, and at last became irritated.

"The devil take me!" he said, in a low voice, to Madam Thierry, "one would swear that she asked nothing better than to be put into the street."

Was this really Madam d'Estrelle's secret thought? Had she said to herself that if her husband's family abandoned her, left her poor, she would no longer owe so much respect to the name she bore; that she might disappear from society, live as she chose, marry according to her inclination?

Yes and no! At moments she abandoned herself to the dream of obscure happiness which had come to her, like a delightful vision, in Julien's studio. At other times she became the Countess d'Estrelle again, and asked herself, with terror, how she could break away from her surroundings and habits, and, above all, endure blame and contempt; she who, up to this time, had been so great a favorite in the small but aristocratic circle in which she moved.

It is well known that there was at this time a violent and desperate reaction in the aristocratic world against the invasions of philosophy. Perhaps no other historical epoch presents such strange contrasts! On one side public opinion, queen of the future, was proclaiming doctrines of equality, scorn of social distinction, the philosophy of Jean Jacques Rousseau, of Voltaire and Diderot. On the other hand, the constituted authorities, terrified by a progress which they had not dared oppose, were now too late trying a resistance, whose only effect was to plunge them into an abyss. Still, to one whose horizon was limited, and who could not foresee the morrow, this resistance appeared formidable; and a timid and gentle woman

like the Countess d'Estrelle, was very naturally alarmed by it. Like all of her class, she imagined that the conduct of the court would determine the destiny of France. And there were moments, just at that time, when the terrified king did his best to resuscitate the monarchy of Louis XIV. His efforts were pitiful, and utterly useless; but, regarded from a certain point of view, they appeared of sufficient importance to irritate the people, and augment the pride of the privileged classes. The court and city had proclaimed the triumph of Voltaire; on the day after that triumph, the clergy refused to grant him a tomb. Mirabeau had written a chef d'œuvre against the arbitrary power of the *lettre de cachet*. The king had said, in speaking of Beaumarchais, — "If his piece is played (the Marriage of Figaro), the Bastile must be torn down!" The third estate was constantly increasing in intelligence, ambition, and real importance; the court had reëstablished the privileges of rank in the army as well as in the clergy, and had decided, — what Cardinal Richelieu would not have dared decide, — that in order to become an officer or prelate, it should be necessary to prove four generations of nobility. The American Constitution had just proclaimed the principles of the *Contract Social* of Jean Jacques Rousseau; Washington and Lafayette were dreaming of freeing their slaves, and the French minister had granted new encouragement to the slave trade; the lower ranks of the clergy were becoming more and more democratic, day by day; Sorbonne was seeking a quarrel with Buffon, and the higher ecclesiastics had demanded a new law for *repressing the art of writing;* public opinion had raised its voice against capital punishment; *examination by torture* was in full vigor. The queen had protected Beaumarchais; Raynal was forced to become an exile.

These attempts at reaction, amid the general tendencies of the age, were repeated in devout circles. The principal nobility, however they may have differed in other respects, agreed in blaming those of its members who allowed themselves to be seduced by the new philosophy. In conservative saloons, the king and queen were

overwhelmed with curses and sarcasms, as soon as they seemed to abandon the theories of the *king's good pleasure.* But, as soon as they laid a stone upon the feeble dam that was erecting against the revolutionary spirit, the devotees of these circles renewed their allegiance, and imagined that everything was saved; no one suspected the rapidity of the torrent, and the nearness of the overflow. Scoffs, scorns, and caricatures were the order of the day. The coming danger was so utterly despised, that it was laughed to scorn.

The set of people with whom Julie was intimate were timid and gentle in disposition, like herself, and were opposed to exaggeration of every kind; but, beyond this little coterie, she felt the influence of a larger and more formidable circle, — that of the family of the Count d'Estrelle. This haughty family disliked her, because she silently resisted their tyranny; and, although she avoided them as much as possible, she suffered from the consciousness of their displeasure. Still beyond this formidable circle, another, yet more powerful and more threatening, — that of the second wife of the Marquis d'Estrelle, — cast a shadow over her life. Excessively bigoted, opposed to every sort of progress, despising the philosophers, openly hostile to the great Voltaire himself, imbued with all the prejudices of birth, and angrily occupied about the preservation of its pretended rights, — this coterie inspired Julie with the greatest alarm. Her fear may have been childish, but it was excessive and irresistible. The marchioness was known to be an avaricious, wicked, and treacherous woman; and we have seen that the Baroness d'Ancourt herself, in spite of her conservative ideas, spoke of her, as well as of her friends, with the greatest aversion. Julie was but slightly acquainted with her, and tried to believe her piety sincere, but she was afraid of her; and when she asked herself why she was living in such a state of timidity and melancholy, the disagreeable spectre of this withered personage, with green eyes and pitiless tongue, appeared before her. It was therefore out of apprehension that she tried to defend the marchioness in conversation, and to silence her

friends when they ventured to call her a harpy and a bird of ill-omen.

It was only natural that poor Julie should detest the opinions of the marchioness and her friends, but she was too inexperienced, and too ignorant of the general spirit of the age, to understand how trifling the persecutions would be that she would have to brave, if she had resolved to live according to her heart and conscience. She was shut up in a little cage of prejudices, like a bird who thinks that the universe is all a cage around it, and who no longer comprehends the murmur of the wind among the trees, and the flight of other birds in space.

"It may be that there are happy people," she said to herself, "but they are far away! and how can I join them?"

Thus it is, upon the eve of a terrible revolution, that the prisoners of the past weep over their chains, and think they are riveted upon them for all eternity. Usually, however, Julie forgot all these questions of external facts, to lose herself in vague reveries, and in secret anxieties, of a new kind. We will soon see what she was reflecting about, and how difficult it was for this generous, but timid heart, to enter into harmony with itself.

Fifteen days had passed away since the catastrophe of the *Antonia*, and Madam d'Estrelle had neither seen or heard of Julien. She could almost have imagined that he had never existed, and that her two interviews with him had been a dream. Madam Thierry had not entered her garden. Julie, very much surprised at her absence, had sent to inquire about her, and received word that she was a little unwell; — there was nothing serious the matter, but she was obliged to keep her room.

She questioned Marcel, but without obtaining any satisfaction; he repeated that his aunt was somewhat indisposed, but entered into no details. Julie dared not question him farther; she saw plainly that her neighbor wanted to break off every sort of relation, even the most indirect, between her son and herself. Finally, Madam Thierry reappeared one morning, when the countess had

ceased to expect her. Interrogated by Julie with timidity and reserve, she replied, with affectionate confidence, —

"My dear and well-beloved countess, you must pardon me for having had a bad dream, which is now dissipated. Too hasty in judging, I allowed myself to be foolishly alarmed, and alarmed you with my chimeras. I believed that my son had the audacity to love you; believed it so firmly, that it has required fifteen days to disabuse me of the idea. Forget what I told you, and let my poor child enjoy once more the respect that he has never ceased to deserve. You are not the object of his prayers and vows. He venerates you, as he ought to do; he would die for you, if necessary; but his feeling is not a romantic passion, but an ardent and true gratitude. He swore that it was so; I doubted his word at first, but I was wrong. I have observed, nay, more, have watched him for the last fifteen days, and I am reassured. He eats, sleeps, talks; he is interested in everything, he comes and goes, works cheerfully; in a word, he is not in love. He makes no effort to see you, he talks about you with tranquil admiration, he seeks no opportunity of attracting your attention, and will never do so. Pardon me for my folly, and love me as before."

Julie accepted this statement, perfectly sincere upon the part of Madam Thierry, with amiable satisfaction. They talked about other things, and remained together for an hour, after which they separated, congratulating each other that they would have no further cause of trouble, and would be able to renew their friendship without agitation, and without fearing that it would be dangerous to any one.

Why was it that Julie felt so strangely sad after this interview? She could not think of any good reason for her melancholy, and laid the blame upon the visits that she had happened to receive. She suddenly discovered that her old friend Madam des Morges was an insupportable gossip, that the old Duke de Quesnoy was tiresome and monotonous as a sledge-hammer; that her cousin, the wife of the president, was a prude, and a

hypocrite; and that the abbé (there was always an abbé in every circle at that time) was personal and insipid. Finally, when Camille came to make her toilette, she was cross, and sent her away, saying, —

"What's the use?"

Then she recalled her capriciously, and asked whether the period of her half-mourning had not ended, three days before.

"Yes, madam," said Camille, "it is really over! And madam is very wrong not to throw aside her mourning-dresses. If she wears them much longer, it will look very badly."

"How so, Camille?"

"People will say that madam prolongs her regrets out of economony, so as to wear out her gray dresses."

"That is a very powerful reason, my dear, and I yield. Make haste, and bring me a rose-colored dress!"

"Rose-colored? No, madam, it is too soon for that! They would say that madam had worn mourning against her will, and that she has changed her mind as quickly as her dress. Madam must wear a pretty toillette of *chiné* silk, royal blue, and embroidered with white bouquets."

"Very well. But have not all my dresses got out of fashion during the two years that I have been in mourning?"

"No, madam, I have taken care of that. I have made the sleeves over, and changed the trimmings of the waists. With white satin bows, and a lace coiffure, madam will be perfectly well dressed."

"But why should I care to dress, Camille, since I do not expect any visitors?"

"Has madam given orders that she was not at home?"

"No; but I shall, since you have suggested it. I don't want to see any one."

Camille looked at her mistress in surprise. Not understanding her mood, she said to herself that madame had the blues, and arranged her toilet without daring to break the silence. Julie, sad and abstracted, allowed herself to be adorned. When the servant had retired,

carrying off the gray robes that had become her property, she looked at herself from head to foot, in a large mirror. She was exquisitely dressed, and beautiful as an angel. Therefore it was that her heart again cried, *What's the use?* She hid her face in her hands, and began to cry like a child.

V.

IF Julien had been a roué, he could not have pursued a better course for winning Madam d'Estrelle's heart. Day succeeded day, and they never met, even by accident. And yet Julie, either from an excess of confidence, or from heedlessness, passed more of her time in her garden than in her drawing-room, and preferred a walk amid its lonely groves to the conversation of her friends. On some evenings she shut herself up, under the pretence of restlessness or weariness, and, at such times, dressed elegantly, as if expecting some unusual visit. She would wander to the very bottom of her garden, hurry back in alarm at the slightest sound, return to see what had frightened her, and sink into a sort of amazed reverie, on finding that all was quiet and that she was really alone.

One day she received a declaration of love, quite well written, and without signature or family seal. She was very much offended; Julien, she said, had failed in all his engagements, and deserved to be treated with cold disdain. On the following day, she discovered that this attempt had come from the brother of one of her friends, and her first feeling was one of joy. No, certainly Julien would not have written in such terms; he would not have written at all. The love-letter, which she had thought exceedingly graceful, as long as her uncertainty lasted, now seemed to her in very bad taste, and she threw it away with scorn. But what if Julien should take the same means of communicating with her. Doubtless he wrote as well as he talked. Why didn't he write?

As soon as Julie had asked herself this question, the consciousness of her own weakness made her blush painfully.

"What is the use of my self-control and my reason," she said to herself, "if I allow my heart to go out in this way in pursuit of a love that avoids me? Really I am only protected by the indifference with which I am regarded, and even this shame does not cure me. Why am I so inconsistent? I thought at first that any advance upon the part of this young man would offend me, and that I would repulse him haughtily; but, on the contrary, I am irritated by his submissiveness, wounded by his silence; — angry with him because he has forgotten me. My mind must be very morbid."

She was going into a perfumer's shop one day, and met Julien at the door. As he had no right to speak to her in public, he pretended not to see her. She noticed upon the counter a pretty little fan, which he had painted for his mother, and had brought to the store to have mounted. Imagining that it was intended for her, she made up her mind to refuse it; but how impatiently she waited for this little present.

"He will send it to me mysteriously," she thought; "it will be an anonymous offering, and then —"

The present did not come; it had not been intended for her. How foolish she had been to suppose that it was! Julien was in love with some other woman, a petty bourgeoise, or a woman of the demi-monde, — an actress, perhaps. She could not sleep for two nights; and then, suddenly, she saw the fan in Madam Thierry's hands, and breathed again.

In spite of herself, she could not help talking about Julien with Madam Thierry, and there was no end to her devices for turning the conversation to this subject. She wanted to learn what sort of life a young artist led; and although very much afraid of hearing disagreeable or painful details, asked questions continually. After inquiring about the tastes and habits of artists in general, she would refer suddenly to Julien. "Your son, for example," she said one day, in the course of such a conver-

sation, "must have led a very brilliant and dissipated life, — a very agreeable life, at all events, — before his father's death and your present trials."

"My son's character has always been serious," replied Madam Thierry, "and I must say that young people of all classes seem to me very different at present from those whom I knew in my youth. My poor husband had a fertile, brilliant, and graceful imagination; he was one of those persons who fill life with unexpected pleasures; far from being ambitious, and eager in the pursuit of glory, his aim seemed to be the enjoyment of whatever is most agreeable. Painting *chef-d'œuvres*, was his amusement, and he allowed nothing to trouble him. The artists of the present day are impatient to excel their predecessors. They have invented criticism. M. Diderot, with whom my husband was very intimate, often taught him to appreciate his own works more highly than he would have dreamed of doing; and, when my little Julien listened to this remarkable man, devouring him with his great eyes beaming with attention and curiosity, M. Diderot used to say, 'That child has the sacred fire.' But my husband did not want people to put too many ideas into his head. He believed that the beautiful ought to be deeply felt, and not too much studied. Was he right in this? The imagination, he thought, ought to be adorned, and not oppressed. Julien was gentle and patient; he read and pondered a great deal. Real connoisseurs admire his painting more than that of his father, and when he speaks of art it is easy to see that he understands it thoroughly; but he is not so popular with people in general, and is very indifferent to society. His mind is full of a great many subjects, in which he is interested; and when I say to him, 'You do not laugh, you are not gay, you have not the recklessness that belongs to your age,' he replies, 'I am happy as I am. I really do not care for amusements, I have so many things to think about.'"

These confidential conversations with Madam Thierry gradually enabled Madam d'Estrelle to understand Julien; and the respect with which he had inspired her at first

sight, changed to a feeling of tender timidity, that made her love him the more. It was no longer possible for her to regard him as an inferior, and yet this young artist belonged to a class whom she had been in the habit of hearing called *those people!* In talking with her friends, she sometimes tried to plead the cause of the intelligent and virtuous, whatever might be their rank. Her friends were sufficiently progressive to reply, "You are perfectly right; birth is nothing, — it is merit alone that is important." But these were mere maxims, which it was the fashion for educated people to employ; they meant nothing. Doctrines of equality had not yet begun to influence manners. The very same people who made these remarks, would not hesitate, a moment afterwards, to blame vehemently a certain duke who had given his hand to a plebeian for the sake of patching up his estates with her dowry; or some princess, so captivated with an insignificant fortune-hunter, that, to the disgrace of all honest people, she had consented to marry him. They would allow a young girl, or a young widow, to fall in love with a man of good family, even although poor; but, if he were not well-born, she was the victim of a shameful infatuation, — an immodest attraction; she was sacrificing her principles to her senses; marriage was no justification; she fell into public contempt. Julie, who had always been treated with so much respect and consideration, — the only compensation of her melancholy youth, — shuddered with horror when she heard her friends talking in this way; and if the object of her secret passion, at such moments, had entered her little circle, apparently so liberal and progressive, she would have felt obliged to rise and say, "What do you want here, monsieur?"

But this little circle broke up at ten o'clock; and, ten minutes afterwards, Julie was in her garden. She gazed upon the little light in the pavilion, trembling like a green star through the foliage; and imagined that if Julien should meet her at the turning of one of the paths, she would not be able to flee from him.

While poor Julie was going through all this agitation, Julien was comparatively calm. His intentions were so

sincere, so upright, that he recovered his moral health, and imagined that he had really subdued his passion.

"No," he said to himself, "I did not deceive my mother; "the feeling with which Madam d'Estrelle inspires me is that of friendship; — a very intense, elevated, and exquisite friendship, and not, as I thought at first, a violent and fatal passion. Possibly, indeed, I may have had this fever in the beginning; but it was dissipated on the very day when I saw, face to face, this simple, good, confiding woman; on the very day when I heard her sweet, pure voice, and comprehended that she was an angel, to whom I am unworthy to aspire. I am not in love with her, in the ordinary sense of the word; I love her with my whole heart, that is all, and I will not allow my imagination to torment me. The grave has scarcely closed over my poor father; every hour is occupied in laboring for my mother. No, no; I have neither the right nor the time to abandon myself to an absorbing passion."

Marcel remarked Julien's tranquillity, and did not pay much attention to the agitation that Madam d'Estrelle sometimes betrayed. He called upon her one day when she had just returned from another visit to her father-in-law, the marquis. He was considered out of danger, and Marcel hoped that he would consent, before long, to assist his client more effectually.

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* you take a great deal of trouble about me," said Julie; "but is it worth while? I assure you that I should really like to be poor; probably I should not suffer from ennui so much as I do."

"And yet you look very elegant, and are going, I suppose, to some great entertainment?"

"No, I shall take my dress off. I do not intend to go out. With whom can I go? I have quarrelled with Madam d'Ancourt, my old convent friend, and she was the only person whom I could visit alone in the evening. I am not intimate enough with my other friends to go to their houses without a chaperon. Madam des Morges, who might accompany me, is horribly lazy; my cousin, the wife of the president, is not received in the best so-

ciety, and the Marchioness d'Orbe is in the country. I am really suffering from ennui, Monsieur Thierry. I am too much alone, and there are a great many days when I have not the heart to do anything."

This was the first time that Julie had complained about her situation.

Marcel looked at her earnestly, and reflected.

"You ought to have some amusement," he said; "why don't you go to the theatre sometimes?"

"I have no box anywhere. You know that I cannot afford to keep one."

"Why should that prevent you from going wherever you choose? Keeping a box the year round is a sort of slavery. It makes you conspicuous, and compels you to have a chaperon. We bourgeois allow ourselves little diversions at slight expense, and requiring no inconvenient display. This evening, for example, I am going to take my wife to the *Comédie-Francaise*. We have hired a closed box on the ground-floor."

"Oh, how delightful to go there! You cannot be seen at all, can you? You can enjoy the play, laugh and cry as much as you choose, without being criticised by the gallery. Have you a place for me, Monsieur Thierry?"

"I have two. I intended to offer one to my aunt."

"And the other to her son? Then —"

"That makes no difference: he can go another time; but what will people think if they meet you in the lobbies leaning upon the arm of your lawyer? Or, if you are recognized seated by the side of Madam Marcel Thierry, what will they say?"

"Let them say what they choose. They will be very foolish to see anything wrong in that."

"I agree with you, but people are very foolish, and they will say that you are in low company; nay, more, I have softened the word out of respect for my wife. They will say that you are in *bad* company."

"It is abominable, that people should be so foolish! Your wife is a very amiable woman, I have been told, and is very highly thought of. I will call upon her tomorrow, for I know that it would not be polite to go to

her box without ceremony, and without asking her permission beforehand. Yes, I must make her acquaintance; and then, some time, we will go to the theatre together."

Marcel smiled, for he understood perfectly well the feeling of cowardice that had taken possession of his noble client at the idea of being accused of associating with bad company. She considered the opinion of the world cruel, unjust, insolent and absurd; but she was afraid of it, nevertheless, and fear does not reason.

"You are perfectly right," Marcel replied. "I recognize your delicacy and good heart in all that you say. My wife will thank you for your kind intentions, and, from this evening, will be flattered to offer you her box; but take my advice, countess, and do not leave your own circle, either this evening, or to-morrow, or at any time; at all events, unless you have some very good reason, well considered and well matured, for doing so. Eat if you are hungry, but do not force yourself to eat to gratify a caprice. The world to which you belong wishes to be exclusive, and you ought not to defy it, unless to obtain some great personal advantage, or to do a very good deed. No one will believe that you are unconventional merely for the sake of being so. People will be surprised, at first, and then they will seek serious and hidden motives to account for your simplest act."

"And what will they find?" said Julie, anxiously.

"Nothing," replied Marcel, "consequently they will invent some story; and gossip of that kind is always malicious."

"It follows, then, that I must be condemned to solitude."

"You have accepted it courageously, hitherto, and you know that it will cease whenever you choose."

"Yes, if I choose to marry; but where will I find a husband combining all the qualities required by the world and by myself? Think for a moment! According to you he must be rich, according to my friends noble, and, to please me, he must be amiable and lovable. I shall never find such a man, and I would do better —"

Julie dared not finish her sentence, and Marcel thought he had no right to question her. There was a pause, which both found awkward; Julie interrupted it, by exclaiming, suddenly, —

"Ah! *mon Dieu*, do not imagine that I am tempted to forget my principles, and enter into a frivolous liason! I meant, — I may as well say it, — that I should do better to seek happiness in an obscure marriage."

"It depends upon what you mean by obscure!" said Marcel. "You ought to insist upon a fortune, at all events; for if you give rank the go-by, there is no sort of doubt that the family d'Estrelle will abandon you."

"Suppose they do?"

"If the husband of your choice is poor, and you bring him a dowry of debts —"

"Oh, yes, you are right! I should add to his poverty all the anxiety, all the dangers, by which I am tormented. I did not think of that. See how heedless I am! Oh, Monsieur Thierry, there are some days when I long to be dead! You are wrong not to take me to the theatre; I feel gloomy this evening, and should like to forget that I exist."

"Is it so bad as that?" replied Marcel, earnestly, alarmed at her distressed expression. "Very well, then, — put on a thick black hood, and a large black mantle. There is a carriage at the door, — we will take it, and call for my wife; I will explain the circumstances to her in a few words, and we will go and hear *Polyeucte*. That will change the current of your ideas. Be quick! for if visitors arrive, you will not be able to go."

Julie jumped for joy, like a child. She soon muffled herself up, gave her servants their liberty for the evening, and started with Marcel. Divided between fear and delight, she was as much excited as if this little escapade with a lawyer and his wife had been an alarming adventure.

"And Madam Thierry?" she said, when they were on the way.

"We will leave Madam Thierry where she is," said

Marcel; "I have sent her no invitation, and we should be kept waiting while she was dressing. Besides, if you are recognized in spite of our precautions, I prefer that you should not be seen with a lady who has a grown-up son, — a young man, by the way, of whom uncle Antoine was very jealous. My son is a little rascal, scarcely twelve years old; we will take him, and that will complete the party, — bourgeoise and patriarchal."

They stopped at Marcel's house. Leaving Julie shut up alone in the carriage, he hurried in, and soon returned with his wife and son. Madam Marcel Thierry was a good deal intimidated, but she was too intelligent to attempt paying compliments; and, after a moment, felt perfectly at ease with the amiable Julie, who, for her part, thought her good and sensible. They got out of the carriage a little in advance of the file, walked to the theatre, entered it without meeting curious or impertinent loungers, and were soon installed in a dark box, where Madam Thierry and her son took the front seats, so as to shield Madam d'Estrelle and the lawyer. They listened to the tragedy with the greatest delight. Julie had never enjoyed herself so much at the theatre. She felt perfectly free, and this bourgeoise family interested her. She regarded them with curiosity, as the representatives of a class that she knew nothing about; and, although they were a little restrained by her presence, husband, wife, and child addressed each other with a tender familiarity that touched her heart. In the most interesting scenes in the play, Madam Thierry would turn to her husband, and say, in a low voice, —

"Dost thou see well, my dear? Is not my bonnet in thy way?"

"No, no, my child," the lawyer would reply, "don't trouble thyself about me. Take care of thyself."

The child applauded when he saw the pit applaud. He would clap his little hands in an important manner, and then suddenly would lean his head upon his mother's shoulder, and kiss her. That meant that he was enjoying himself very much, and thanked her for bringing him.

These simple manners, characteristic of the middle

classes, — this tender *thee and thou*, — these caressing epithets, at the same time so familiar and so sacred, — sometimes made Julie feel like laughing, and then again moved her so deeply as to bring tears to her eyes. Anything of the kind would have been reputed bad style in her circle; this was the way in which common people lived and talked. In Madam d'Estrelle's drawing-room, Marcel assumed skilfully the language and bearing of a man of the world acquainted with all classes of society. In his household he threw off this formal manner, and, without ever being gross, adopted the familiar tone that is natural between intimate friends. Julie, therefore, surprised him forgetful of his ceremonious bearing, — living to please himself in a moment of cheerful ease and relaxation. At first, she was both shocked and charmed; but soon she said to herself that these people were right; that it would be better for all husbands and wives to call each other *thee and thou*, for all children to lean upon their mothers, and all spectators to show an interest in the play. In aristocratic circles, people said *you;* they had no tender, heartfelt epithets, — they refined away the meaning of every sentiment. Elegance was the first consideration in language, dignity in deportment. The heart could find expression only according to rule; it was obliged to hide its impulses, or clothe them in an affected and symbolical style, that had given birth to the madrigal. Admiration for genius was never allowed to rise to enthusiasm. They enjoyed, appreciated; their words were all carefully measured. Finally, they made it a rule never to be betrayed into showing any emotion; and, in this perpetual simper of aristocratic grace, became so charming, that they almost ceased to be human.

Madam d'Estrelle now, for the first time, noticed these things, and thought about them seriously. The little Julio, — as he was called to distinguish him from Julien, his godfather, — had an interesting face. He was a comical little fellow, with a well-formed head, turned-up nose, brilliant eyes, sarcastic mouth, and the cool, impudent manner of a school-boy making the most of his vacation. Even if he had been disguised like a *grand seigneur*, it

would have been impossible to confound him with the genuine little nobles of the day, — so very pretty, polite, and polished, that it was almost impossible to tell them apart. Julio, no less than themselves, had the style of his class, but this did not deprive him of his piquancy. Each person in the middle class must live for himself, and make his own way according to the qualities that he possesses, and hence the bourgeois genius does not seek to efface individuality. The child had a bright mind, and his eager curiosity betrayed his Parisian descent. He was at the same time inquiring and affectionate, discerning and credulous. To keep him from getting hold of Madam d'Estrelle's name, which he might have repeated in his father's office, his parents had told him that she was a client who had recently arrived in Paris, and that this was the first time that she had seen a play. Julie amused herself by asking him questions; and, between the acts, the little fellow did the honors of the capital and the theatre. He showed her the king's box, the pit, and chandelier; and even explained the play, and told her about the relative importance of the characters.

"You are going to see a very beautiful piece," he said, before the curtain rose; "you will not understand it very well, perhaps, because it is in verse. I read it with my godfather Julien; he likes it very much, and he explained it all to me, just as if it had been in prose. If there is anything you do not understand, mademoiselle, you must ask me."

"You are chattering like a magpie," said his mother; "do you suppose madam does not understand the great Corneille better than you do?"

"Maybe she does; but perhaps she is not so learned as my godfather."

"Madam does not care about the learning of your godfather! You imagine that every one knows him."

"If you don't know him," said Julio, turning to Madam d'Estrelle, "I will show him to you. There he is, close by."

"What!" said Marcel, feeling very much annoyed; "is he here? Do you see him?"

"Yes, I have seen him this good while. He loves Polyeucte ever so much! He's seen it played more than ten times, I'm sure. There he is, in the pit, three benches off. His back is turned, but I knew him right off; he has got on his black coat, and opera hat."

Madam d'Estrelle's heart beat violently. She looked at the bench to which the child pointed, but recognized no one. Marcel did the same, with a like result. Julio was mistaken; the person whom he had thought to be Julien turned, and proved to be a stranger. He was in the theatre, however, in the second gallery, just above Marcel's box, and far enough from imagining that, by descending to the ground-floor, he might have seen Madam d'Estrelle. But, even if he had known this, he would have remained in his place. His resolution no longer to seek chance interviews with the countess was not to be shaken.

As an artist, he had his entrances to the Comédie-Francaise. He listened intently to Polyeucte, as a devout person listens to a sermon, and went out before it was concluded, because he was afraid that his mother would sit up for him. In crossing the vestibule, he was very much surprised to meet uncle Antoine face to face. It was uncle Antoine's invariable habit to go to bed at eight o'clock, and probably he had never before entered a theatre. Julien greeted him cordially; it was the best way, even if he was repulsed.

"You have returned, then," he said; "we have been very anxious about you."

"Who do you mean by we?" replied Antoine, in a surly tone.

"Marcel and I."

"You are very good. You thought, I suppose, that I had gone to the Indies, you seem so surprised to see me."

"I acknowledge that I did not expect to meet you here."

"It was just the contrary with me; I was perfectly sure that I should meet you here."

This reply was quite enigmatical to Julien, and, without condescending to explain it, uncle Antoine turned his back upon him.

"It is useless to talk," thought Julien, "his mind is seriously affected."

He passed on, but returned several times to see whether the horticulturist was going out or coming in, and judge whether he really knew where he was. Uncle Antoine remained standing at the foot of the staircase, and stared at him with a mocking expression, but gave no other sign of frenzy.

A few moments afterwards, he was lost in the crowd filling the vestibule. One of the first groups that he saw was the family of the lawyer, with an unknown lady, taller than Madam d'Estrelle, and completely enveloped in a black hood. Uncle Antoine followed them to the street, took the number of their carriage, and sent in pursuit of it the adroit and skilful spy who had informed him that Madam d'Estrelle was going out with her lawyer, and who, in all manner of disguises, and under all sorts of pretexts, had been spying about, and sometimes within, the hotel d'Estrelle for the last month.

In those days theatres closed at an early hour, so as to allow time for supper after the play. Julie, after reconducting Madam Marcel to the street des Petits Augustins, arrived at her house at about ten o'clock. Marcel, who had escorted her, was going away without entering, when she recalled him. Her porter had just informed her of an important piece of news: the old marquis, her father-in-law, had died at eight o'clock that evening, just as they imagined that he was cured. They had sent for Julie, so that she might be present when he partook of the sacraments. Her absence, which it would be difficult to account for, on account of the peculiar position that she had herself explained to Marcel, might have the most fatal consequences.

"Ah, that is what made me feel so!" said Marcel anxiously, and in a low voice, as they stood together upon the great front steps. "I told you not to go. I felt a presentiment of some danger; but there is no use in lamenting over what cannot be helped. The most alarming thing is the sudden death of the old man. Come, madam, you must make haste to show yourself at his

bed-side. Get into the carriage again, and I will accompany you to your mother-in-law's house. I will not go in, for it would not do for you to make this visit of condolence escorted by your lawyer. To-morrow, I will take the field in your behalf, and we will learn the contents of the will, if, as God grant, there is a will."

Julie, very much agitated, got into the carriage.

"Stop a moment," said Marcel, "I cannot wait for you at the dowager's door; her people would see me, and I have an idea that they tell their mistress everything. You will have to drop me before driving into the court; and, as I should not like to have you return alone in this cab, you had better order your servants to have your carriage got ready and sent after you."

"You think of everything," said Julie; "I don't know what would become of me without you."

She gave directions, and they started.

"You must remember another thing," said Marcel, while they were driving; "you will not find the widow in tears, but at her prayers; do not be reassured as to her state of mind by this apparent sanctity. Be sure that she has taken note of your absence, and will be prepared to subject you to an examination in the very midst of her orisons. Do not forget that she hates you, and, as an excuse for robbing you, would like nothing so well as to find you out in a fault."

Julie wondered how she could best explain her innocent adventure.

"You will find nothing better to say than the truth," said Marcel; "tell her that you were at my house."

"If that were all; — but the play! In the eyes of my mother-in-law, going to the theatre is a frightful sin; she would consider it so, whoever had accompanied me."

"Don't refer to it, then; say that my wife was sick, — that you feel a friendship for my wife, — because, — because she has done you some service, — because she is charitable, and helps you in doing good. Burnish it up with a little varnish of devotion; who will blame you?"

They arrived at their destination. Marcel stopped the carriage, jumped out, and Julie drove into the court

of the hotel d'Ormonde, rue de Grenelle-Saint-Germain. This hotel was the property of the Dowager d'Ormonde; since her second marriage with the Marquis d'Estrelle, the marquis had lived with her in the house of her first husband.

The dowager was very rich, and her house had a stately, but forbidding and formal aspect; she had few servants, and made but little display; all was splendid, cold, and lifeless. The hotel consisted of a number of buildings, the principal one of which, containing the apartments occupied by the marchioness, stood in an inner court, enclosed by a grating. At this grating Julie was obliged to stop and ring, but, sure of being admitted, and knowing that Marcel would have to return on foot, unless she sent the carriage after him without delay, she dismissed the coachman as soon as she saw some one preparing to open the door.

Instead of admitting her, the porter entered into a strange discussion. The marquis could not see any one, he said, because he was dead. The priests had come to administer the sacraments, and the marchioness was shut up with him and the deceased. She could give audience to nobody at such a time. Julie insisted in vain that she had, as a near relative, a right to enter. The porter, either intentionally or from forgetfulness, left her standing outside the door, and went to inquire. Returning, he informed her that madame had given strict orders that she was not to be disturbed.

As these negotiations had lasted for some time, the Countess d'Estrelle felt no sort of doubt that the marchioness had been communicated with, and had refused to receive her. She had fulfilled her duty, and had nothing further to urge. Her carriage ought naturally to have come a great deal faster than the cab; thinking that it must have arrived, she retraced her steps, crossed the first court, and went out at the street-door, which was kept by the wife of the porter, who immediately, with rude haste, shut it after her. There was really a carriage in the street, but, in spite of her short-sightedness, Julie saw at once that it was only a cab.

Supposing that the coachman had not understood her order, or that Marcel had sent him back as a precaution, she imagined that this was the very carriage in which she had come, and called the driver, who had fallen fast asleep upon his seat. It was impossible to wake him without pulling the flap of his cloak. Those who remember what cab-drivers were forty years ago, can judge what they were forty years earlier. This one was so dirty, that Julie hesitated to touch him with her gloved hand. She held up with care her ample silk skirts, so that they might not rub against the muddy wheels. Never had she been in such an embarrassing position! She was frightened at being alone in the open street at near midnight. The few people who passed, stopped and stared at her, and she trembled lest, out of kindness or impertinence, they would offer to come to her assistance.

Finally the coachman woke up; and stated, in reply to her questions, that he did not know her, that he had brought two priests of the parish to admister to a dying man, and had been ordered to wait for them. He would not move for any consideration. Julie looked around anxiously. Her carriage did not arrive. She lifted the heavy knocker of the door, so as to return to the court of the hotel, but knocked in vain. Either special orders had been given about her, or the porter was always inflexible; at all events he did not open the door.

She became excessively alarmed. The idea of going away alone, and on foot, was not to be thought of; to remain standing before this door was equally impossible. There was not a single store in sight; and, provided that it was not in the street, she would have to wait for her carriage, it mattered not where. The dependences of the hotel d'Ormonde extended quite a distance to the right and left. An abbey was upon one side, and upon the other was the convent of the Visitation. There, perhaps, she might have obtained shelter, but it was quite a distance off; and, after walking ten minutes, at least, to get to it, she would have had to enter into a discussion before being admitted. Opposite the hotel d'Ormonde, there was a tall grating, enclosing an alley midway be-

tween the hotel de Puisieux, and the hotel d'Estrées. Thinking that she might persuade the keeper of this grating to let her wait in his room, by giving him a louis, she crossed the street; but, when upon the point of ringing, noticed that there was neither a keeper nor a bell. It was a private gate, used only by the owners of the two enclosures. Julie lost courage; and when, just at this moment, a man appeared suddenly by her side, as if he had risen from the earth, she was so frightened that she came very near fainting. As soon as he named himself, however, she uttered an exclamation of joy: it was Julien. She explained her mishaps in a few confused words, which Julien, as he was already partly acquainted with the facts, and had not come to this place by chance, understood without difficulty.

"It is useless for you to wait here for your carriage," he said; "it will probably be some time before it arrives."

"How do you know?"

"I went this evening to the Comédie-Francaise."

"Did you see me there?

"Were you there, madam? I did not know it."

"Then —"

"That enables me to explain my meeting with M. Antoine Thierry, and his remarks. He, without doubt, knew that you were to be there, and was playing the spy. He made an ironical observation, which, although I did not understand it, gave me food for reflection. In returning to the pavilion, I felt a little uneasy, and stopped before your hotel. Your people were in great excitement. It seems that the coachman could not be found. The porter knows me by sight, and seeing that he was in trouble, I went up to him, and inquired whether you had met with any accident. He informed me of the death of the Marquis d'Estrelle, and of the fact that you had been escorted here by my cousin Marcel. The coachman, in the meanwhile, arrived, dead drunk, and utterly incapable of understanding your orders. The porter left me, saying that Bastien would go all right, when once upon his seat. Not being so phlegmatic as your porter, I

hastened to follow you. My hope was to find Marcel still here, and warn him not to leave you alone with a drunken coachman, but I was a few minutes too late. You were really alone, and have been very much frightened."

"It is over," said Julie. "I am calm now. Take me back on foot. Providence has sent you to be my guide."

"It is too far to go on foot," replied Julien, "and your shoes are not suitable for walking. The cab yonder shall carry you, with or without the consent of the coachman: I answer for that. I will ride on the outside, and will reconduct you in safety."

Julien led Madam d'Estrelle to the carriage, put her into it, and ordered the coachman to drive on. He refused. Julien jumped upon the seat by his side, took the reins, and swore that he would throw him into the river if he offered any resistance. The noble bearing and determined air of the young man frightened him so, that he submitted; but, before they had gone a hundred rods, he stopped, and began shouting, "Robbery! Murder!" A group of men were coming from a house, and the poor devil hoped that they would come to his assistance, and enable him to resist Julien's violent assault.

Chance decreed that these persons were fashionable young men, just coming from a late supper, and a good deal intoxicated. It was one of those moments of excitement when people are very ready to become the redressors of wrongs, especially if they are four to one. They speedily stopped the horses, and one of them tried to open the carriage door; for the malicious coachman cried at the top of his voice, —

"Help! help! A villain running away with a nun!"

"Let us see whether she is worth the trouble!" cried the group, with one voice.

Before they could get the door open, Julien was upon his feet, and had repulsed the foremost of these inquisitive gallants in an energetic manner. The young man so roughly handled began to insult him, and drew his sword; his companions followed his example. Julien had no

time to draw his sword. He defended himself with his cane, and used it with so much coolness, vigor and address, that one of his opponents fell, and the others drew back. Julien, who had not left the carriage steps, took advantage of this fortunate respite to jump in and lift Julie out by the opposite door. After carrying her some distance in his arms, he stopped, and turned to wait for his adversaries; but, either seriously wounded, or sobered by the approach of the watch, they were hurrying rapidly away in the opposite direction.

"Walk quickly, madam," said Julien to Madam d'Estrelle; "let us avoid the curiosity of the police."

Julie walked quickly and well. Fear had paralyzed her for a moment, but the sight of the danger to which her protector was exposed, restored her energy. After making several turns to mislead the police, they came out in safety upon the new street, now called the boulevard des Invalids. It was scarcely built up at all, and, at this hour, was completely deserted. Julie had not noticed a stain upon her gloved hand, but she felt the moisture of the blood upon her wrist, and pausing, cried, —

"Ah! *mon Dieu*, you are wounded!"

Julien had not felt anything, and was sure that he was not seriously hurt. He tied up his wounded hand in a handkerchief, and offered Julie his other arm.

"I assure you that it is nothing," he said; "and what if it were? Unluckily, my opponents were not very formidable, and I deserve but little credit for driving them off. Handsome dandies! *Petits-maitres!* And yet these are the people who constitute our nobility."

"Do you despise the nobility so much?"

"I do not despise them, but I hate impertinence; and as nobles are not always ready to fight duels with plebeians, I am very glad to have thrashed them as a plough-boy would have done."

"Alas!" said Julie, thinking aloud, "and yet these people have the power to insult and to oppress the feeble."

"The feeble! Who do you mean by the feeble?" replied Julien, misunderstanding her. "The man without

a title? Undeceive yourself, madam; it is to this man that the future belongs, for he has upon his side right, real justice, and the determination to overthrow the abuses of the past."

Julie did not understand him, and began once more to tremble; not because she was still afraid of meeting their enemies, but at the mysterious power that seemed to her to emanate from Julien. She gazed upon him stealthily, and thought his countenance shone in the moonlight. She imagined that her feeble hand was resting upon the arm of a giant.

And yet Julien's nature was perfectly simple; a thorough artist, he was not at all ambitious, as far as he was concerned, of a public career. Dedicated to art, proposing to devote his life to the study of nature, he did not feel called upon to play a fiery part in revolutionary tempests. The terrible power with which he was clothed in Julie's eyes, was only the reflection of the divine power descending upon the *new class;* — the class to which he belonged. He was one of the hundred thousand among the millions of crushed and disappointed men, who were soon to say, "The measure is full, — the past has had its day." The state of feeling to which he had referred was almost universal, and allusions to it were constantly being made; but Madam d'Estrelle did not know this, and imagined that she had listened to a momentous prophecy, uttered by an exceptional man. This was the first time she had ever heard opinions and customs that she regarded as invincible, braved and despised. A feeling of ardent confidence mingled with the superstitious terror that she experienced; a desire to lean so much the more upon this vigorous arm, which, animated by a noble heart, had just defended her, singly, against four assailants.

"You think, then," she said, continuing to walk rapidly, "that it is possible to shake off the yoke of this unjust world which oppresses consciences and condemns new ideas? I wish I could believe so."

"You do, since you wish to believe it."

"Perhaps; but when will this state of freedom begin?"

"No one knows how or when; we only know that justice must finally prevail. The present state of things may last fifty, or it may last a hundred years longer Why should you care, madam? You are one of those who profit innocently by the misfortunes of others."

"No indeed; I have no advantages at all. I have nothing of my own, and am nothing in the world."

"But you are of the world, — you belong to it; it is bound to protect you, and would never wound you personally."

"Who knows?" said Julie.

Fearing that she had said too much, she reverted to their late adventure, to change the subject:

"It frightens me to think," she said, "that a great misfortune might have occurred! Ah, your poor mother! how she would have cursed me, if I had occasioned —"

"No, madam, that could not have happened," replied Julien; "I had the right on my side."

"Do you believe, then, that Providence interferes in such cases?"

"Yes, since Providence is within us. It gives strength and presence of mind. A man who is defending the honor of a woman against villains has every chance in his favor. It is easy for him to be courageous; he feels that he cannot yield."

"How much faith you have," said Julie, deeply moved. "Yes, I remember, you told me when you were at my house, *the other day*, that faith removes mountains, and that you were faith in person."

"*The other day!*" replied Julien, simply, "why it was more than a month ago!"

Julie dared not acknowledge that she did not know how many days and nights had succeeded that brief interview. She was silent. Julien was so respectful that he would not resume the conversation of his own accord, and the longer it lasted the less capable she felt of breaking it, without betraying her emotion. Finally they reached the pavilion.

"Do you not think," he said, "that I ought to leave you here, so that I may not be seen by your people?

I will follow at a distance, until you are safe within the door of your hotel."

"Yes," she said, "but what will my people think to see me return alone, and on foot, at such an hour? Stay, — I had better go through the pavilion into my garden; they will imagine that M. Marcel escorted me."

In fact, that was the best way. Julien had his key, and opened the door.

"I will wake my mother," he said, "and she will get up and receive you; in passing just now, I told her not to wait for me. She imagines that I have gone to take supper with Marcel."

"Do not disturb her, I will not allow it! It would take too long to tell her about our adventures to-night; and, half awake, she would feel alarmed. You can tell her all to-morrow. Open the garden door for me, and I will escape in silence. Thanks, and adieu!"

They entered the pavilion; the narrow hall leading from the street-door to that of the garden, which they had to cross, was perfectly dark. In this poor establishment they could not afford to keep a lamp burning uselessly, and Babel was only a day-servant, and did not sleep in the house. Julien went first; he opened the door promptly, bowed deeply to Madam d'Estrelle, and immediately shut it, so as to show her plainly that he never crossed the threshold; he did not pretend to follow her, even with his eyes, as she glided along the walk like a shadow.

So much discretion, such perfect respect, devotion so delicate, so watchful, so active, and really efficacious, touched Madam d'Estrelle deeply. It was a magnificent June night. Her bed-room was upon the ground-floor, overlooking the garden, and she knew that she could arouse Camille, who was sitting up for her, by tapping at the window. But she knew, also, that Camille's sitting up meant taking a good nap on the best sofa in the room, and she thought she could leave her, without inhumanity, to watch in this way for a few minutes longer. Her heart was full of emotion, — delicious dreams floated through her mind; she could not resist the desire of sitting down upon the edge of the little lake,

so clear and motionless, in which the moon was reflected as in the mirror of Venus.

The song of the nightingale was hushed; he was asleep over his young brood. The silence was profound: even the zephyr (the breeze of those days) was so deliciously drowsy, that it did not stir a blade of grass. Paris was asleep also, at least in the peaceful quarter, the extremity of which was marked by the hotel d'Estrelle. You were more likely to hear sounds peculiar to the country than to the city in this region; at so late an hour, they were confined to the occasional crowing of a cock and the barking of a dog, at long intervals. The chimes rang out the hour of the night, their sweet, silver voices echoing each other from convent to convent; then ecstatic silence reigned again. If the distant rolling of some vehicle rattling over the pavement of the busy quarter of Paris became faintly audible, it sounded rather like the low murmuring of a wave, than a noise produced by human activity.

Julie, fatigued, and a little bewildered, inhaled with delight the calmness of the night, the perfume of this solitude. She turned her eyes upon a great white star suspended in the heavens, not far from the moon, and reflected in the same wave. For a time she thought of nothing, remembered nothing, — she merely rested. But suddenly she was seized with a violent palpitation of the heart; it seemed to her oppressively hot, and then too cold. She arose to go in, and went to the window of her bed-room, but did not knock. Returning to the stone bench, she sat down, and began to weep. Rising again, she walked around the little lake, like a soul in pain, and then paused, smiling, like a soul in bliss. She consented to question herself; and when her heart replied, "I love him," she was terrified, and would not allow it to speak. Then she asked her conscience what was the meaning of this terror, — this savage austerity, contrary to nature, useless to God, which she constantly displayed. Her conscience replied that it had nothing to do with this state of mind; that it arose, not from a sense of duty, but from *prudence*, — a sort of fictitious conscience that obliged nature

and God to yield to conventional ideas, — fear, calculation, the consideration of personal interests improperly understood. According to this way of reasoning, everything was measured by six-franc pieces. Marcel had proved it to her. Julie had no right to love, because she had not enough six-franc pieces. Was Marcel right? Must her soul be sacrificed to the grossest of all facts, — to the implacable menace of misery?

"No," said Julie, "it shall not be! I will sell all that I possess, own nothing, be poor, work,— beg, if necessary, but I will love. Besides, he will take care of me, he who already so tenderly cares for his mother. If he loves me, he will accept the additional burden that I will be to him, and accept it with joy. In his place, I would do as much."

Tormented by a strange agony, she began to walk to and fro.

"Does he love me well enough to devote himself to me," she said, "with the passion that I thought he betrayed at our first meeting? Ah! I am continually asking myself that question, and it torments me in vain; neither my conscience, my reason, nor my heart can reply. He may regard me merely with a feeling of friendship. He is a good son, and respects me because I was anxious to assist his mother. He is grateful, and proves his gratitude by an admirable devotion. What more? Why should I believe that he loves me madly, and longs to pass his life at my feet? It cannot be that he feels this longing, since he never seeks me except when I am in need of his assistance. At other times he is absorbed by active duties; he devotes himself to his mother, his art, perhaps to some young girl of his own class, whose dowry, when he marries her, will make him well off, while I, — involved in debt, — but am I so? What if my husband's father has given me a fortune? How changed my life will be! In that case, shall I forget this young man so beneath me in position? Shall I marry a man of rank, whose alliance will bring me honor and distinction? Never! At present, it is he who n I love, and he alone; no longer an unknown ideal. I love him

and I do not know whether I can ever change, — can ever forget. I fear not, since I have tried in vain to conquer my heart; since I am vanquished, when I forbid myself to feel. My God, my God, love then is a positive terror, a positive torture. It is the fear that he does not love me that is killing me. How shall I learn the truth? I will never do so, perhaps. How can I live without knowing?"

While thus tormenting herself, she wandered heedlessly into a side-walk, quite near the pavilion. The door was open, a dark shadow detached itself from the house. Julien, as if he had heard her thought, as if he had been irresistibly drawn to reply to it, came straight up to her.

Julie immediately recovered her self-possession and pride. Surprised, she was going to address him like an offended queen, but he did not give her time to speak.

"Why are you here, madam?" he said; "will no one open the door for you? Are your people all asleep, or waiting for you on the other side of the hotel? You cannot pass the night in this garden, dressed as you are. It is two o'clock in the morning. The dew is falling; you will be cold, — ill. And see, your hood is on your shoulders, your head is bare, your arms are scarcely covered. Stay, here is a cloak belonging to my mother; take it, and pardon me for being here."

"But how did you know? —"

"I heard you walking on the sand; — heard a light step, that could only be yours. You stopped every few moments, but always began again. I was in my studio; the door was half open. I said to myself, 'She is still out of doors, she cannot make herself heard, she is cold, — fatigued, suffering, alarmed, perhaps.' I could no longer remain within. Besides, it was my duty—. No, madam, such a state of things could not continue. Whatever may be said or thought, I do not wish to see you die."

At last Julien was moved, his voice trembled as he spoke, his hands trembled as he placed his mother's cloak around Julie's shoulders. His agitation, however, did not proceed from an effort to resist the impulses of pas-

sion; he was troubled and excited as a father is whose child is in danger. It did not even occur to him that he could be accused of seeking Julie with a selfish or treacherous design. Forgetting all conventionality, therefore, he expressed his solicitude in an ardent tone, that completely overwhelmed her. She seized both his hands in hers, and, carried away by an impulse of exalted passion, — the first of her life, — as unexpected as it was ungovernable, — cried distractedly, —

"You love me, you love me! I am sure of it! Speak! tell me that it is so; — let me hear it, know it; you love me as I wish to be loved!"

Julien stifled a cry, and, obeying a first impulse, carried Julie into his studio. But he recovered in a moment all the respect which he naturally felt for a person of her extreme purity of character. Falling at her feet, he covered the tips of her icy fingers with kisses, and implored her not to doubt him.

"Have confidence in me," he said, "I have sworn that I would be your brother; I will be like a brother to you now. Do not doubt me, for it is your confidence that will save me. I told you that I adored you, and it was true, — how true I did not know myself! My love is stronger than you think, — more terrible than I myself imagined; but I would kill myself rather than cause you to shed a tear! Do not be alarmed, — you shall never blush for having ordered me to love you."

Would he have been able to keep his word? Amid all the delirium of his joy he believed that he would, and Julie added to his strength by her courage.

"No, I do not want to blush," she said, with the frank sincerity of an earnest love, "I intend to be your wife. Frivolous intrigues are not suited to a man like you; to a woman like me gallantry is impossible. Rather than forget my honor, I also would kill myself. Julien, whatever may happen, — whether I am rich or poor, — for there is an equal chance of the one as of the other, — let us swear that we will be married. If I am poor, you must not lose courage; without weakness, without faltering, you must support, cherish me. If I am rich, no foolish

pride must keep you from sharing my fate. Let us arrange all our plans now, — decide, — bind ourselves by an oath. I warn you that I am not courageous, and therefore I wish to be engaged too far to retreat, for then I know that I shall look neither to the right nor left. Fidelity to my love will be my duty, and that thought will give me strength, decision, coolness. True religious principles enabled me to accept despair in my married life; I will accept happiness now, and will struggle to be happy, as I have struggled, hitherto, not even to desire to be so. Swear, my friend! we must be all to each other, or never meet again; for it is certain that we love each other, and that our love is stronger than ourselves. The world has nothing to do with this. For the last fifteen days I have no longer lived, — it has seemed to me that I was dying. To-day I do not know myself; just now, if you had told me that you did not love me, I should have followed you in despair. Oh, no, no! I should have thrown myself to the bottom of the lake, with the moon and glittering star. Julien, I am losing my senses! I have never said such things before; I did not know that I would dare speak so, and I am talking so to you; — what spirit is speaking through me? Have pity upon me, — sustain me, — guard my honor, which is yours; preserve for yourself the purity of your wife."

"Yes, my wife, I swear that I will!" cried Julien, in a transport of enthusiasm; "and you, Julie, swear also, before God, that you will be mine!"

"*Mon Dieu!*" said Julie, bewildered, and suddenly becoming a little cowardly again, "and we have only known each other for a month!"

"No, not even for a month," replied Julien; "a month ago we met for quarter of an hour in this studio, and for quarter of an hour in your house; this evening we have passed half an hour together in the street; so that altogether we have known each other only for an hour. We may as well acknowledge, Julie, that we do not know each other at all, according to all appearances. But, notwithstanding, we love each other! A love like this comes from God. He hears us now, and comprehends all that

we feel; for it was His will that we should love; He desires it."

"Yes, you are right," she replied, with renewed enthusiasm, inspired once more by her lover's exalted faith. "We know nothing of each other beyond the fact of our mutual love. Is not that enough? Does not this consciousness render everything else superfluous? What remains? All that the world knows of you is that you are a skilful artist, a worthy young man, a good son. Do I love you because you possess these qualities? You have heard people say that I am kind, gentle, generous; but this is not the reason that you love me! There are other good men, other estimable women, for whom we should never have dreamed of forming an affection. We love because we love, — that is the whole thing."

"Yes," replied Julien, "love is like God; it is because it is, — it is absolute! What matters it that we shall discover in each other, hereafter, such and such peculiarities of mind and character? The great, the absorbing interest of our life, is our affection; sure of that, we have known each other a hundred years, — forever, — love has neither beginning nor end."

They talked in this incoherent way for more than an hour, in low voices, in the studio, vaguely lighted by the moon glimmering through the trees. Julie was seated; Julien knelt before her, and held her hands in his, although they had not ventured to exchange a kiss. The moon was sinking towards the horizon, and yet the light became stronger and stronger: they were obliged to confess that the dawn was breaking.

Julie arose, and made her escape, after swearing, and making Julien swear a hundred times, that their union was indissoluble.

Camille was very much surprised, when she opened the door for her mistress, to see that it was nearly three o'clock.

"Are my people still waiting for me?" said Madam d'Estrelle.

"Yes, madame, they supposed that madame would re-

main all night to pray over the body of the marquis. The carriage went for madame. It must have been at the door of the hotel d'Ormonde."

"No, it delayed so long that I did not wait. M. Thierry escorted me home by way of the pavilion, and I stopped there to talk about my affairs. Tell the servants that they can go to bed; the carriage will probably return when the coachman becomes sober."

"Ah, *mon Dieu!* madame knows what happened, then? Poor Bastien! I can swear to madame that he only got drunk out of spite, because madame drove in a cab."

If this explanation made Julie smile, the account she gave of her own proceedings appeared singular to her chambermaid; but she suspected nothing. Julie's life was so simple and pure, that she was above suspicion. Camille merely thought that her affairs must be very much involved, since she had to pass the night in talking with her lawyer. She imparted her anxiety to the other servants, who took the matter greatly to heart, although resolving, at the same time, that they would not let their wages be in arrears. The valet-de chambre, who was the friend of Camille, and protector of Bastien, went to the hotel d'Ormonde in search of the latter, but did not find him. Bastien had understood that he was ordered back to the tavern. He had returned thither, and was sleeping the sleep of an angel, — no other is reputed delicious enough to be compared with that of a drunkard. The carriage was waiting at the door under the charge of the footman, his subordinate, who had consented to hold the horses, on condition that he should be supplied, every quarter of an hour or so, with something to keep him warm. The rogues did not reappear at the hotel until broad daylight, and did not recover their senses for twenty-four hours. Under other circumstances, Julie would have discharged them; but she foresaw that this Bachanal adventure would cast her own romantic adventure into the shade, and keep it from being brought into discussion in the antechamber and the lodge. This really happened; and, as Madam d'Estrelle's servants were not at all spiteful, it

seemed as if no inquiries would ever be made about the employment of this unusual night.

On the following evening, the lovers considered it prudent to remain within doors; but, on the next night, although they had made no appointment, they met in the groves of the garden, and repeated, with new delight, the vows they had so lately made. For some time they continued to meet in this way, without trouble or apparent danger. Nothing was easier than for Madam d'Estrelle to slip from her apartments; she could do so openly, since her people had been in the habit of seeing her take the fresh air alone, and at quite a late hour, during the summer nights.

What a happy life, if it could only have lasted! These meetings had all the charm of mystery, and no remorse troubled their delight. Free, both of them,— aspiring only to the most holy union, and sustained by a love strong enough to be patient, — they met together in the night, amid thickets of flowers, in the splendor of the summer, just opening and still retaining all the graces of the spring, like two fiancées who are privileged to love, and who, without abusing their liberty, withdraw from observation, so as not to make others jealous. It was the honeymoon of sentiment preceding that of passion. Passion, indeed, they felt, but resisted it, or rather held it in reserve by common consent, for the period of conflict and danger that could not long be delayed. They knew that they would have to fight a battle in defence of their love, and Julien sometimes said to his friend, —

"You will have to suffer for my sake, I know, and I shall suffer from the consciousness that you are being annoyed; but we will belong to each other then, and our happiness will render us invulnerable to outside attacks. Even if you were not made sacred to me by your modesty and my veneration, it seems to me that selfishness itself, properly understood, would teach me not to exhaust all my happiness at once."

At other times Julien was more agitated, and less resigned to delay; but, at such moments, Julie calmed

him by imploring him to remember what he had said on the previous day.

"I have been so happy since we have loved each other thus!" she said. "Do not change a situation full of delight. Think: on the day when I acknowledge openly that I have chosen you as the companion of my life, people will laugh at me, denounce me, accuse me of yielding to a vulgar infatuation; I know virtuous women, who will say to me scornfully, — 'Accept him for a lover, since you must have a lover, but see him in secret, — do not marry him!' How shall I be able to rebuke their impertinence, if my conscience is not clear, — if I have no longer the right to say, 'No, he is not my lover, he is my betrothed, whom I love, and who has proved his respect for me as no other man would have been able to do!' We shall need all our strength, Julien, and truth is the most powerful of all weapons with which to struggle against false ideas."

Julien submitted from devotion, and also out of respect to the heroic sentiment (that sentiment by which Corneille was animated) that had governed his life and restrained the first impetuosity of his youth. He could govern his senses, since he had never allowed them to rule him. And then, this romance of pure love, celebrated in the balmy night, appealed to his imagination; for the artist, these poetic meetings were intoxicating festivals. There were gloomy recesses, and dense masses of foliage in this garden, such as we see in the compositions of Watteau. And Julie herself, with her rather tall figure, so simply and gracefully clad in ample, flowing skirts, harmonized with the very feeling which made Watteau a painter without trickery, an Italian realist, although living in a society of conventionalism, and an age of affectation. In a certain retired corner, sharply defined upon the dark background of the groves, and leaning forth vaguely in the night like a ghost, stood a high pedestal encircled with ivy, and surmounted by a large white vase. Faint gleams of light, vanishing, intangible, glimmered amid the foliage, and the shadows of the branches fell upon the marble. As the twilight deepened, the outlines of the vase gradu-

ally became indistinct, but its form never ceased to be elegant and majestic.

It was to this spot, as soon as his mother had retired, that Julien went to await Julie; and, when she approached, smiling, tranquil as an embodied dream of happiness, with her silk robes shining in the darkness, and her beautiful bare arms, holding some light satin drapery, he imagined that she was a modern muse presiding over his destiny, bringing him all the promises of the future, and all the delights, all the enchantments that belong to the real life of the present.

It was well for them to enjoy the present without thinking too much of the morrow, for the future was too uncertain to admit of their forming definite plans. They did not yet know how long they would be allowed to remain in happy tranquillity, forgotten and abandoned by the world, in this garden, which Love had transformed into a terrestrial paradise. Soon, perhaps, inexorable creditors would even drive them from the pavilion, and force them to seek in some suburb a cottage with a garden under its windows. Whatever their fate might be, they were resolved to meet it together; this was the only thing that was certain, — their only irrevocable determination.

VI.

THE marquis d'Estrelle had been dead two weeks, and still, in spite of all possible investigations, there was no trace of a will. People believed that there had been one, although no one dared assert distinctly that the marchioness had destroyed it. A number of indications persuaded Marcel that this was the case, but there was no use in expressing suspicions that could not be proved true, and things quietly took their legal course. The marchioness, that is, according to the terms of her marriage settlement, inherited all the property of the deceased, and she made no mention of any sum set apart

for paying the debts of the late count. The terms of Julie's settlement, however, seemed to call for such a provision. It was a question for the law to decide; and Marcel advised Julie to begin a suit, if only to stop the suits against herself, that were already threatened. Julie was opposed to going to law. She thought that in law-suits both parties were almost sure to lose, and Marcel confessed that she was not very far wrong.

"I am very well aware," she said, "that the marchioness does not like me, and it may be that she does not legally owe me anything; but her standing is very high, and, wealthy as she is, it is impossible that she will allow a person bearing her name to be left entirely destitute. It would not do to speak to her about money matters so soon as this, and would be imprudent, as you yourself observed, to appear in too much haste. Whenever the right time comes, I will speak to her, although the task will be a very disagreeable one. You shall tell me when."

Some time afterwards, Marcel notified her that she must take her measures without delay.

"You must go at once," he said, "there is no time to lose; your creditors are proposing to begin proceedings against you to-morrow."

Without being discouraged at the untoward result of her first visit, Julie had called a second time upon the marchioness a few days after the decease of the marquis. On this occasion she had been received coldly, but civilly. The will being destroyed, her presence, perhaps, was no longer feared. The marchioness referred to her absence on the evening of her father-in-law's death, and made several tart observations about the worldly pleasures which were attending the end of Madam d'Estrelle's mourning. In reply, Julie gave the explanation agreed upon with Marcel. The marchioness listened with an air of impolite curiosity, and added, —

"It is unfortunate for you, countess, that you will have to go into mourning again!"

Julie continued to visit the dowager without making any reference to her own embarrassed circumstances.

When delay was no longer possible, she called; and, with her usual sweetness of manner, explained her position: brief and gentle as her words were, however, she could not manage to make them very humble.

"I really beg your pardon," answered the marchioness, "but not having the advantage of being intimate with attorneys, I know nothing about such matters. If you will send your lawyer to mine, he shall examine into my rights as well as my obligations, and he will be satisfied that you were not one of the persons left under my care."

"This is not the answer, madam, that I expected from a person of your uprightness of character. Very possibly you do not owe me anything. Since you assert that it is so, I am bound to believe you. But I had supposed that family considerations —"

"I have not the honor of belonging to your family," interrupted the marchioness, dryly.

"You mean to imply," answered Julie, indignant at this provocation, "that the Marquis d'Estrelle married beneath him, in selecting from a family one-half of whose nobility was of the sword, and one-half of the robe. That intimation does not offend me. I am not ashamed of my ancestors, who were magistrates, nor do I consider myself inferior to anybody. But I did not come here to discuss my right to the honor of bearing the same name with yourself. As a matter of fact, I am the Countess d'Estrelle. Is it right that I should lose the support promised to me, and supposed to be assured to me? Although the marquis may have forgotten me upon his death-bed, he must have informed you of his intentions; and does it not follow that you ought to pay his son's debts, in his place, or at least a part of them?"

"No, madam," answered the dowager, "no such obligation follows from any intention that he ever expressed to me. It was the opinion of the marquis that you ought at once to surrender your right of dower, since it is not worth enough to pay your husband's debts; and that in that case, measures should be taken to pay what remained of them."

"This has often been suggested to me, madam; and I have asked whether, in consideration of this sacrifice, it was proposed to settle any income upon me."

"Are you entirely without means? Have you inherited nothing at all from your own family?"

"Twelve hundred francs a year, madam, and no more, as you yourself know."

"Oh, well, you can live upon that, my dear! It will enable you to drive in a fiacre, to hire a box at the theatre, to visit attorneys' wives, and to run about the streets at midnight, leaning upon the arms of sign-painters. Your tastes are of this description, from what I hear. Gratify them, by all means. Surrender your dower-right, or sell at any sacrifice all the property which you have derived from the d'Estrelle family; I don't care which. My only wish in the matter is, that you should be married to somebody, so as to change your name, and prevent you from being confounded with me by people who don't know us."

"You shall have that satisfaction, madam," said Julie, rising, "for I should dislike such a disagreeable confusion as that, as much as yourself."

She bowed, and withdrew.

Marcel was waiting at her house, and saw her come in, pale, and with her eyes flashing with indignation.

"All is lost," he exclaimed, "I see that! Tell me quickly, madam, what has happened. You frighten me!"

"My dear Thierry, I am ruined without remedy," replied Julie, "but it is not that which is choking me. I have been insulted, — trodden under foot. At the very first word, although I had said nothing rash, had offered her no provocation, she insulted me to my very face. I have been followed by spies, too, and the most innocent circumstances have been reported, and most venomously misrepresented. Thierry," she continued, sinking upon a chair, "you are a virtuous man; I swear to you that I am a strictly virtuous woman."

"No one but a scoundrel could think of denying it," cried Marcel. "But come, take courage, — explain!"

The countess gave him a full account of her interview with the marchioness, but did not refer to her understanding with Julien; for they had resolved, for the present, not to reveal their secret, even to Madam Thierry herself.

When Marcel knew all, he was very much discouraged, and seemed to think the situation altogether desperate.

"You have no alternative, as far as I can see," he said, "between sudden and absolute destitution, — a terrible trial for a person of your habits, — and a lawsuit, of which the result is extremely uncertain. I do not know how to advise you. My worst apprehensions are realized. The plan is to rob you, and to set the world against you, too, by blackening your reputation. The marchioness has been sharpening her weapons for some time; she provided herself with them on seeing that the marquis was failing, and even at the very moment of his death made use of them. She has been plotting your destruction in cold blood, has set spies upon you, and followed you about —"

"Stay, M. Thierry; has not M. Antoine had a hand in all this?"

"Julien believes he has. For my part, I am still in doubt. I will ascertain, however; and, if necessary, will organize a spy system in opposition to his; but the first thing is not to know who has been betraying you, but to resolve upon your own line of conduct."

"First of all, no lawsuit!"

"Very well, but we will not say so. We will make great demonstrations of fighting. I will attend to that. They want you to surrender your dower-rights for nothing. For my part, I mean that they shall pay for it, and I shall hold out for a right good price, too."

"In the meanwhile," observed Julie, "I have quarrelled with my husband's family; for, as you can very well imagine, I shall never enter the house of the marchioness again."

"I cannot recommend you to pursue a different course, for she has evidently resolved to push you to extremities

War has been declared; and, although we did not provoke hostilities, we must not draw back."

Marcel, however, had no time to prepare for battle. Two or three lawyers, of rather bad character, who were talking about a forced sale at auction, and who declined to hear of any further delays, were pursuing him vigorously. He made up his mind that it would be necessary to comply, therefore, with the demands of the marchioness, and he went to Julie to tell her so.

"They intend to rob you," he said, "and I am afraid that, in case of resistance, they will force you to give up even the small capital that you inherit from your own family. It is very certain that the count's debts, with the arrears of interest, will amount to more than what is left of his fortune. The Marchioness d'Estrelle means to come and live in the hotel d'Estrelle, or, at all events, to get it into her hands."

"And its dependencies as well?" asked Julie; "the pavilion also?"

"The pavilion also. My aunt will be entitled to an indemnity for quitting the premises, but that is a question to be discussed separately, and does not concern you."

Julie made no reply, and sank into a fit of deep melancholy. The idea of being ruined, — of being reduced to an income of twelve hundred francs a year, — had not really assumed distinct form in her mind. But to leave at once and forever this elegant mansion, — this delicious garden, which had within the last few weeks become so dear to her, — to lose the neighborhood of the pavilion, — to forego her interviews with Julien, so full of charm and security, — this was indeed a catastrophe! A whole world of delights was crumbling beneath her feet. A phase of existence, filled with the purest happiness, was ended with brutal violence, and without allowing her the least time for preparation.

Marcel at once went to see the notary of the marchioness, and found that he took a very high tone, notwithstanding the concessions that he was prepared to make. This was not the fault of the notary, who was really an excellent man, but he was forced to follow his

client's directions as to the conduct of her business. He had, moreover, been prejudiced against Julie, and regarded her as a foolish young woman, ready to sacrifice everything to the gratification of her unregulated passions. This was more than Marcel could bear; he was highly indignant, and swore upon his honor that there was no secret connection between the countess and his cousin, — that they were scarcely acquainted, — and that Julie was the purest of women, and the most entitled to respect and to pity. Marcel was known to be an exceedingly honorable man, and the notary was rather staggered by the warmth of his conviction. But, coming back to the question of the legal rights of the marchioness, he demonstrated that she was mistress of the situation, and that Julie might even consider herself fortunate to be allowed to do as she required.

He promised, however, to do all in his power to inspire his client with more liberal views respecting the widow of her step-son. The next day he wrote to Marcel, to say that the marchioness desired to see the hotel d'Estrelle, which she had not entered for a long time. She wished to examine the condition of the premises with her own eyes, and to have an appraisement made in her presence, with his assistance and that of the lawyer of the countess. It was easy to see, from the turn of this letter, that the notary had displeased his client, by pleading Julie's cause, as he had promised, from a moral point of view, and that he himself was far from being satisfied with the suspicion and harshness of the dowager.

He made his appearance, along with her, the same day. Julie, unwilling to see her cruel enemy again, locked herself into her boudoir, leaving all the other doors open.

The Marchioness d'Estrelle was of a harsh disposition, even for a Norman; in Madam d'Aucourt's circle they used to call her "Madame de Pimbêche," "Madame d'Orbêche," and so on. She was accused of borrowing money by the year, and lending it again for short terms, at hard rates. Perhaps there was some exaggeration about this, but if she was proposing to advance a large sum in order to settle with the creditors of the Count d'Estrelle, and

obtain possession herself of Julie's property, it is certain that she meant to get some of it back again in the details of the business. This was proved clearly enough, by her promptness in causing an appraisement.

She went all over the house, inspecting everything with keen and unerring eyes. She made objections, and noted deductions for every little rub on the wall, depreciated as much as she could the value both of the real and personal property; and both in speech and action showed a disgusting avarice, and aversion for her relative, that astounded Marcel, and more than once made the notary blush. When they came to the boudoir in which Julie had taken refuge, she ordered the door to be opened. She was obeyed instantly. Julie had heard her coming, and not choosing to be compelled to receive an odious visit in spite of herself, — such an insult was too much to be endured, — she had gone out by way of the garden, leaving orders with Camille to open the door when required. Camille was very proud, — there had been aldermen among her ancestors! She could not resist the temptation of giving the dowager a lesson; going to a table where she had hastily laid out a few articles on purpose, she said, in a tone of sarcastic humility, —

"Perhaps madam would like to count the linen? Here are some of my mistress's neck-handkerchiefs and ribbons."

The dowager usually would have cared little for the talk of a servant, but her hatred of Julie was stung and exasperated by the blow. She looked hastily through the window, and saw Madam d'Estrelle crossing the garden towards the pavilion.

Julie, no doubt, made a great mistake in going to the pavilion, but she was angry also. It seemed to her that she was driven out of her house, her own room, her most private sanctuary, by this impudent persecution. She fled for a refuge; and, too irritated for consideration, instinctively, and without stopping to reflect, ran to Madam Thierry, — to Julien.

"They will not come and hunt me down over there," she said to herself; "they will not dare. I am the owner

of that property yet; no one except myself has the right to enter premises occupied under a lease from me. Besides, it is time to avow my friendship for Madam Thierry; from this time forward, I shall take the liberty of visiting her as I do other ladies who have brothers and sons."

Just as she was resolutely entering the pavilion, the marchioness, with a resolution not less sudden, issued from the boudoir and rushed into the garden.

"Where are you going, madam?" said Marcel, who had not noticed Julie's flight, but who mistrusted the glittering eyes and abrupt manœuvres of the active and vigorous old woman.

The marchioness, active as a plucked magpie, flew onward, without condescending to reply. Unable to stop her, Marcel and the notary followed.

She knew the way perfectly well, although she had not been upon the premises for a long time, having, since her second marriage, quarrelled with the count, her step-son. She reached the pavilion a few minutes after Julie, found the outer door open, and sprang into the studio as if she had been shot into it.

Julien was there alone; he did not even know that Madam d'Estrelle had come in and gone up stairs to his mother's room. Since his secret interviews with Julie he no longer watched for her approach. Their understanding with each other was so good, that they could afford to dispense with accidental meetings. He was at work, and singing. Julie, as she entered the little vestibule, had felt a sudden vague presentiment that she would be pursued, and had gone up stairs, thinking that the widow's chamber would afford her an inviolable retreat. Julien had never seen the old dowager; and, startled by her sudden apparition, he rose up, thinking that she had entered from the street, and that he was going, perhaps, to receive some commission. This flushed and breathless personage, with her harsh and wrathful countenance, inspired him, however, with a feeling of dislike rather than of expectation.

"That woman would haggle like a second-hand dealer," he said to himself; "perhaps she really is one."

The old lady's mean dress gave no indication of her rank and fortune.

"Are you alone here?" she inquired, without any sort of salutation.

Marcel and the notary now made their appearance, and Julien, astonished, looked inquiringly at Marcel, who made haste to say, —

"This lady thinks of buying the pavilion, and she —"

"It is unnecessary to present me to this person," returned the marchioness, sharply, "and I am quite able to make my own explanations."

"Very well, madam," said Julien, smiling, "this person is very much at your service."

"I asked you a question," continued the marchioness, not at all disconcerted; "let me make it plainer. Which way did the Countess d'Estrelle go?"

Julien started back. Marcel, wishing to avoid a ridiculous scene, caught his eye, and pointed to his forehead, as much as to say, "The lady is out of her mind!"

"Ah, I understand!" said Julien; and continued in the tone that people use to children or idiots, "the Countess d'Estrelle, madam, — I do not know her."

"That is a very foolish reply, Mr. Painter, and quite useless besides. I want to speak to that lady, and I know that she stays here, — from time to time."

"Marcel," said Julien to his cousin, "was it you who brought this woman here?"

Marcel, in an agony, shook his head.

"Was it you, then, monsieur?" said Julien to the notary.

"No, monsieur," said the notary, promptly; "I followed her, and I don't know at all for what reason she came here."

"Then you would have done much better not to have followed me," replied the marchioness, dryly and quietly; "I had a reason for coming into this picture-shop, and you had none. Do me the favor to allow me to transact my business in my own way."

"I wash my hands of it," said the notary; and, bowing to Julien with much politeness, he went out, cursing the cross-grained, fantastic humor of his client.

"As to you, Mr. Attorney —" began the marchioness to Marcel —

"As to me, madam," interrupted Marcel, "this is my own family, and I shall receive no orders except from the lady of the house, who is my aunt."

"I know all that. I know that you are relatives. I know what good friends you are among yourselves, and what good neighbors you are to the widow of the Count d'Estrelle. Stay if you choose, or put me out if you dare!"

"Let us have done, madam, with this disagreeable discussion," said Julien, losing patience; "I am not in the habit of being disrespectful to women, however astonishing their conduct may appear. But I am an artist, — a mechanic, if you will. This is my house, — my picture-shop, as you very properly observed. I am at work, and cannot afford to lose my time. You are speaking of things that I know nothing about, and of a lady that I have not the honor of receiving. If you have no better reason for interrupting me, allow me to leave you."

Taking his canvas and his palette, Julien left the studio, after casting an expressive glance at Marcel, as much as to say, "Now get out of it as well as you can."

"Very well," said the marchioness, by no means abashed at this formal dismissal, "I remember what the old song says: 'Let's search the house a little.' I will not let you off at all. I mean to see the whole of the pavilion, inside and out, up stairs and down, just as I have seen the hotel."

"This way, then," said Marcel, "since you insist upon it. But allow me to speak to my aunt, whose room is up stairs."

"No, by no means," said the dowager, moving towards the door. "I'll speak to her myself; and if they turn me out, — well, I shall be very glad of it, Mr. Attorney."

"You are certainly out of your senses," exclaimed Marcel, involuntarily. "Is it possible that you really suppose Madam d'Estrelle is hidden up there? Come and see! I will show you the way. When you are perfectly satisfied —"

Marcel was a hundred leagues away from imagining that Julie was in his aunt's room. All at once, as he suddenly opened the door of the studio, he saw Madam d'Estrelle and Madam Thierry standing before him. He stopped short, with an expression of the most pitiable disappointment.

Julie had heard the uproarious entrance of the marchioness into the studio, and Julien had come up stairs to tell his mother that a crazy woman was below making a disturbance. He was surprised to see Julie, and, when he learned that the crazy woman was the dowager herself, was distressed enough at her presence. Julie had recognized her voice; and as she knew perfectly well that the old lady would hunt her to the very garret, she made up her mind at once what to do. Taking Madam Thierry's arm, she said, —

"Come, it does not suit me at all to be found in this room, like a criminal hiding himself. I prefer to face the storm; and, since it is my duty to do so, I shall not falter."

Julien, desperate, and ready to give free vent to his anger, remained standing at the head of the staircase, listening, and asking himself whether Marcel alone would be able to protect the two women, whom, of all the world, he loved and respected the most, from being insulted by this old fury.

But, most unexpectedly, as soon as she found herself in the presence of the two ladies, the face of the dowager cleared up, and her anger seemed to disappear. All that she had wanted was to see with her own eyes that she had not been misinformed about Julie's friendship for Madam Thierry, and consequently her intimacy with Julien. It was rather a far-fetched conclusion, indeed, to suppose that she was the mistress of the son because she knew the mother; but as Julien had told the mar-

chioness that he did not know Julie, she had some show of reason for believing what she desired to believe. Quieted by her supposed discovery, as a vulture is quieted when it seizes its prey, she burst into an ill-natured laugh, glanced triumphantly at Marcel, and prepared to depart without saluting any one, or waiting to be spoken to.

"Come, Mr. Lawyer," she said, "I am satisfied; I have seen all that I wanted to. Let us attend now to business."

Julie was about to reply to this insolent and sarcastic speech. She felt so exasperated that she was ready to reveal her secret before them all. Calumniated, treated with contempt, as if guilty of a crime, she felt that she could recover her dignity only by avowing her sincere and legitimate affection. This was very courageous in a woman like her, who had never known what it was to contend with others. She would not probably have been capable of forming such an extreme resolution with cool deliberation, at least without Julien's consent, but indignation gave her courage.

She was not allowed, however, to carry out her purpose. Marcel and Madam Thierry each of them seized one of her hands, and cried, as if in unison, —

"Do not reply; it is beneath you to notice her."

While they held her in this way, the dowager, without condescending to look at her, left the house, and returned to the hotel, followed by the honest lawyer, who had been waiting for her outside, and who, as he left, bowed to Julie in a peculiarly deferential manner.

"You see," said Marcel, "even her own lawyer protests against such insulting conduct; and now that the woman has taken off her mask, nobody will be upon her side as against you. But, for God's sake, madam, how could you have allowed yourself to be surprised in this house, where you never come? I must say that you are very imprudent."

"My dear Thierry," said Julie, "I have something to tell you. Go and wind up your business with the marchioness, yield everything as far as the money questions

are concerned, save only my own little fortune, and come back to the pavilion. I will wait for you."

"But why in the pavilion?" asked Marcel.

"I will tell you when you return," said Julie.

"In fact, madam," said Julien, as soon as Marcel had gone, "what unlucky accident can have induced you to honor my mother with a visit on the very day when your mortal enemy was lying in wait for you? And why do you remain here now, as if on purpose to confirm her strange suspicions?"

In spite of Julien's respectful and modest tone, his words implied a sort of reprimand that astonished Madam Thierry.

"Julien," replied Madam d'Estrelle, with spirit, "the moment for our confession has come. It has come sooner than we expected, but it is inevitable, and I will not shrink from the duty it imposes."

"My excellent friend," she cried, throwing herself into Madam Thierry's arms, "learn the truth. I love Julien! I have engaged myself to him in the most sacred manner. Embrace your daughter, and bless her."

"Ah, *mon Dieu!*" cried Madam Thierry, bewildered, and pressing Julien to her heart; "are you married?"

"Without your consent? Certainly not," cried Julien, embracing his mother in his turn. "But we have only been waiting to beg your consent, until we could do so without fear of distressing and alarming you. Julie has spoken sooner than I should have wished, but, since she has spoken, what can I add? I have deceived you, my dear mother: I love her to distraction, and I am the happiest of men, for she loves me too."

Madam Thierry was so affected by this unexpected intelligence, that it was a long time before she could speak. Even while overwhelming both her children with the tenderest caresses, she trembled; her hands were cold, her eyes were dim with tears; she felt a singular mingling of apprehension and joy. The former sentiment was perhaps predominant, for her first question was to ask Julien why, in spite of his happiness, he had seemed inclined to reprove Julie for being too hasty

"This was the reason," exclaimed Julie; "we agreed yesterday evening, — for we meet and talk together every evening, dear mother, — that we would wait until my business affairs should be definitely settled, before revealing our secret to our friends, or even to you. I saw plainly that I should soon be ruined, and Julien was not at all alarmed at the prospect. He wished, however, for my sake, that every provocation should come from the marchioness; and it is certain that my resolution to marry him, when it is known, will secure her numerous partizans, at least among the religious hypocrites and social prudes of her own circle. He was right, I know, but I cannot endure to be called a woman of gallantry, and they will be sure to give me that reputation if I fear to acknowledge the whole truth."

"There is no doubt of it," said Julien; "it is necessary to acknowledge everything now, but your conduct, dear Julie, has precipitated this necessity. I adore you all the more for your rashness, but it was my duty not to lend myself to it. Love and fate have overcome my prudence, and made my self-sacrifice unavailing. It is no longer time to hesitate! Bless your children, my dear mother! Julie entreats you, — she wishes it; and you, I know, will be as happy in giving us your blessing as we in receiving it."

While the inmates of the pavilion were thus indulging their affection, the marchioness had established herself in the drawing-room of the hotel, and was presiding at a rigidly conducted appraisement of both houses. Marcel fought bravely for his client, and the notary made honorable but useless efforts to reconcile the conflicting claims of the opposing parties. The conclusion finally arrived at was very mortifying to Marcel: it proved impossible to save even Julie's furniture from the claws of her enemy. The marchioness considered that she was doing a great deal in allowing her to retain her diamonds and laces. It was necessary to submit to these hard conditions, for the sale of the property could no longer be delayed, and no competitor had appeared in the field. Marcel had written to uncle Antoine, in hopes that he

would take a fancy to the garden, and would buy it at a fair rate, in spite of his displeasure; but uncle Antoine had made no answer.

There was half an hour of final discussion over the draft of the agreement; a few erasures were made, and some blanks filled. The dowager signed, and Marcel, although very discontentedly, and with many protests, prepared to submit the paper to Julie for her acceptance.

"Why isn't she here?" cried the dowager, abruptly. "She ought to be willing to leave her dear pavilion for a few minutes, to attend to such an important matter."

"You will acknowledge, madam," observed Marcel, "that you have not treated Madam d'Estrelle so kindly as to make her particularly desirous to meet you again."

"Bah! bah! She is mighty touchy! Come, Lawyer Thierry, go and fetch her, — I am in haste to go; and if, on reading the agreement, she should be disposed to raise objections, I, for my part, am not at all disposed to submit to delay. Let her come and talk it over here, — we shall get through all the sooner. What is she afraid of? I have no further observations to make on her conduct. Indeed, as things now stand, I care very little about it, and I have not reproached her either. Did I say a single word to her just now? If I have offended her formerly, it was because she chose to appeal to sentiments which I am not under any obligation to entertain. Let her avoid recriminations, and I will promise not to humiliate her."

"If you will send her a conciliatory message," said Marcel, "expressed in polite and friendly language, I will do my best to persuade her to come."

"Besides," added the notary, "the marchioness has no doubt some arrangements to suggest beyond the mere terms of the agreement. She will, of course, allow Madam d'Estrelle time to find a lodging, before vacating the hotel."

"Certainly, certainly I will," said the marchioness; "I intend to do so. Come, Master Thierry, go!"

Marcel hurried to the pavilion, and persuaded Julie to return with him. He imagined that the marchioness,

in her satisfaction at having made a good bargain, wished to offer some little reparation for her ill-natured conduct; and he appealed to Julie's generosity, and perhaps to her prudence, not to reject the formal reconciliation which is customary in such cases.

They had no time to make any explanation to Marcel at the pavilion. Julie, however, said to Madam Thierry, in a low voice, —

"You know what my means are now; my income is very small, but, by selling my jewels, we shall have enough to purchase the house at Sèvres. I am a suitable match, therefore, for Julien, and I am thankful that the affair has terminated in this way."

The marchioness concealed her impatience at being kept waiting for a few minutes, and begged Julie to read the agreement, and sign it, with something like politeness. Julie took up the pen, but, hearing nothing of the friendly demonstrations that Marcel had led her to anticipate, she hesitated a little, and looked at the notary as if asking his advice. The deference that this showed did not escape the quick perception of the lawyer, who felt a decided sympathy for her.

"This is the proper time," he said to his harsh old client, "to state to Madam d'Estrelle your kind intentions about taking possession under the agreement."

"Ah, oh yes, undoubtedly," said the marchioness; "I wish to take possession of the hotel at once: to-morrow, at farthest. I will allow madam, however, the use of the pavilion for three or four months."

"The pavilion?" said Marcel, in surprise. "The pavilion is leased. The marchioness is surely aware that it is occupied under a nine years' lease."

"The lease is void, M. Thierry, for I did not sign it; and, by the terms of my marriage settlement, the Marquis d'Estrelle could not dispose of his property in any way without my signature."

"Then Madam Thierry will have to move, and without obtaining an indemnity."

"I am sorry for her, but you know my marriage con

tract by heart. Look at the lease, and you will see that it is void."

She took the lease out of her pocket, and showed it to him. He examined it, and was silent.

"What is the matter?" said the marchioness, laughing at Marcel's consternation. "The countess will still be in a condition to make up to Madam Thierry for this little annoyance. One does not reckon closely with one's friends."

"You are quite, right madame," answered Julie, with dignity; "and I thank you for affording me an opportunity of proving my devotion to Madam Thierry. I decline your very kind offer. Madam Thierry and I will leave your premises together, within an hour."

"Together?" said the marchioness. "It is unnecessary to be so open about it as that, madam!"

Julie was upon the point of replying, when a vigorous ring at the door of the ante-chamber startled the marchioness.

"Well, well, let us have no useless quarrelling," she said, suddenly changing her tone; "there are some visitors, — sign, my dear, and be done with it."

Just at this moment, the valet de chambre entered to announce somebody, and she cried out, —

"Say that we can see no one just now. Let them wait."

"Pardon me, madam," interrupted Julie, offended at this assumption of dignity in her presence, "it is my house yet."

Marcel, who had noticed the sudden impatience of the marchioness, felt impelled by a vague, but irresistible impulse, to gain time. He took the pen out of Julie's hands. The marchioness turned pale. Marcel saw it.

"Shall I announce?" inquired the servant of Julie.

"Yes!" exclaimed Marcel, vehemently, for he had espied the visitor's face through the half-open door.

"Yes," repeated Julie, agitated because she saw Marcel's excitement.

"M. Antoine Thierry!" said the servant, in a loud voice.

Julie, in surprise, arose. The marchioness, who was standing, sat down with an angry gesture. The horticulturist came in, embarrassed and awkward as usual, but carrying as high as ever that irascible face of his, which always, with its resolute, haughty expression, contrasted so strangely with his timid manner. Without exactly saluting any one, and advancing in a zig-zag course, but very quickly, he went up to the table where lay the contract, with the inkstand beside it. Then he turned to Julie:

"Have you just been concluding some transaction?" he said, in an angry tone, and yet with a certain expression of anxiety and solicitude.

"Nothing at all is concluded," answered Marcel, "since you have got here. Possibly you may have some offer to make, uncle."

"No one can make any offer," cried the marchioness, in a great state of excitement; "the bargain is closed. I appeal to the good faith—"

"Good faith has nothing to do with it, madam," said Marcel; "we were just about submitting to extremely hard conditions. No one can blame a criminal condemned to death, no matter how resigned he might be, for accepting a pardon that reached him unexpectedly. Come, uncle; you have a fancy for the hotel d'Estrelle. I can say more than that: you need it; you can remove the boundary wall, and make a splendid addition to your garden. The hotel de Melcy is cold, old, gloomy, and badly situated. This house is cheerful and agreeable; cool in summer, warm in winter. You want it. You mean to buy it. Don't you?"

"This is infamous," cried the marchioness. "The consent of the countess is equivalent to a signature. No one ever withdrew from a promise so late as this!"

"Pardon me, madam," retorted Marcel, "you had fair warning. I waited up to the very last moment; I told you three times over, while we were discussing, that if the door should open that moment, and any other purchaser whatever should appear, I would at once tear up this agreement, which I consider an altogether deplorable

one for my client. I only submitted, — I did not consent; I appeal to my colleague here to witness that it was so. Uncle, you are yourself a recognized authority in business transactions. Say, have I the right to put a stop to further proceedings until you shall have had an opportunity to speak?"

"Certainly," answered M. Antoine; "and the more so, since my rights in the matter take precedence over those of the marchioness. Let's see what this instrument is!"

He read it, and observed, —

"This is not my appraisement at all, marchioness; you pluck the bird too close, and oblige me to remind you of our little understanding."

"Go on, sir; make your bid!" cried the dowager; "I can't contend with a man that possesses millions. I withdraw altogether, and leave the field to you."

"Wait, wait!" replied Antoine; "you and I can come to an understanding in half a word, madam! I can arrange this affair in a way to satisfy all parties. But it depends upon you."

"Never!" cried the marchioness, indignantly; "you are a fool, and I am ashamed to have accepted your services!"

She went straight out of the room, forgetting all about her lawyer. Antoine, with his face turned towards the door through which she had departed, remained silent, darkly frowning, and plunged in some mysterious meditation.

"They have an understanding against me," whispered Julie to Marcel; "what are they going to do now?"

"Have patience," answered Marcel; "I think I can guess."

They had no time for further observations. M. Antoine started from his reverie, and turned to the lawyer.

"Well," he said, "how do we stand? What has been decided."

"So far as I am concerned, monsieur," replied the notary, gathering up his papers, and looking for his spectacles, "the transactions between yourself and the mar-

chioness are at an end. My client seems to have given up the object she was in pursuit of, and I must take new orders from her before moving further in the matter."

"Then it is entirely between you and me?" said M. Antoine to Julie, while the notary was taking his departure.

"No, monsieur," she said, referring him to Marcel; "I beg permission to leave you together."

"But why?" asked Antoine, in a strange sort of heart-broken tone, and making a gesture as if to detain her, although without venturing even to touch her sleeve. "Why are you angry with me, Madam d'Estrelle? All that I have done has been in your interest. Why will you not let me tell you so?"

"Very true," said Marcel; "why should she refuse? Come, madam, have patience, and listen; it seems to be our lot to have to face the enemy along the whole line to-day!"

Julie resumed her seat, casting upon M. Antoine a cold and severe look, which completely disconcerted him. He hesitated, stammered, and uttered only unintelligible sounds.

"Come," said Marcel, "you will never get it out, my poor uncle! Let me cross-question you. To begin at the beginning: why was it that you mysteriously left Paris on the morning after a certain tragic experience which befell one of your plants?"

"What, are you going to talk about that?" cried Antoine, his little round eyes beginning to flash furiously.

"Yes, about everything. Answer, or I will carry off the judge, and you will remain condemned."

"Condemned to what?" said Antoine, looking towards Julie; "to her hatred?"

Marcel was trying to bring his uncle to acknowledge his repentance, but, in spite of his signs to the contrary, Madam d'Estrelle interrupted him.

"No, monsieur," she said, "to my blame and pity."

"Your pity! Pity for me!" he cried, in a rage.

"No one ever used that word to me before, and if you were not a woman —"

He paused, and turned to Marcel:

"Pity is another word for contempt," he said; "and if it is by your advice that she talks to me so, I'll make you pay well for it."

"Then justify yourself if you can," answered Marcel, boldly; "for if your conduct has really been as treacherous as it seems, you are simply a detestable man, and every honorable woman whom you have insulted has a right to tell you so."

"How have I insulted her? I have insulted nobody. I saw that she was going to throw herself away. I wanted to keep her from —"

"Throw herself away! You don't know what you are talking about. There are certain dangers that a woman like Madam d'Estrelle never knows, by which she cannot be assailed."

"Words! Words! I don't trouble myself about phrases learned out of books. When a woman gives rendezvous to a young man —"

"Rendezvous? Where did you pick up such nonsense? Whoever told you that, is a liar!"

"You are a liar yourself! You, the accomplice, the confidant —"

"There, stop, uncle! Damnation! You will drive me beyond all bounds."

"Get beyond all bounds, if you want to! I saw you coming out of the theatre with my own eyes."

"And what of that? My wife —"

"Bah! Your wife is a goose! I saw Julien coming out too."

"Julien was not with us. He did not know that we were on the ground-floor in the theatre any more than we knew that he was in the gallery. And, besides, suppose he had been with us, what is the meaning of this mania for bringing accusations —"

"Accusations!" cried M. Antoine. "I accuse nobody except those who are guilty! And how about walking arm-in-arm in the night from the hotel d'Or-

monde to the pavilion, where, by the way, madam remained until three o'clock in the morning? It is possible that Madam André may have been present during the interview, I don't deny that; but that is only an additional reason for bringing accusations, as you say, you ass of a lawyer! And how about all the meetings at night in the garden, that always keep her out until two o'clock, and sometimes later?"

"Where on earth did you pick up this footman's scandal?" cried Marcel. "In what servants' hall have you raked together such a heap of slanders?"

"I don't hang about servants' halls, and I don't get my information from footmen. I have a secret police of my own. I have money enough to pay a few sharp people, who keep on the look-out, and tell me the truth. I don't deny it. I wanted to know what madam's feelings were, and what her reason was for insulting me by commissioning Julien to turn me off. I had a right to do so, and if I revenged myself as I could, I had a right to do that too."

Madam d'Estrelle, who had fully resolved to reveal everything, and take the consequences, listened to uncle Antoine with proud indifference. The brutality of his discourse, — which she attributed to a diseased mind, and excused on account of his want of education, — did not wound her like the intentional and deliberate impertinence of the marchioness. While his uncle was making his agreeable remarks, Marcel observed her, and, in her disdainful and smiling serenity, read a denial of his slanders more eloquent than any words.

"Look," he cried, actually shaking the old man to make him hold his tongue, "look for a moment at the woman whose reputation you are daring to assail! See how superior she is to the dreams and lies with which you have been crammed! You cannot bring the faintest blush to her forehead; her silence confounds your noisy brutality!"

"I shall speak when the time comes," said Julie. "Let M. Thierry go on. You see that he does not provoke me; and, after he has fully exposed my conduct, I

shall expect him to give me an account of his. You are suffering under my just indignation, Monsieur Antoine Thierry: do not forget that. You pretend that you are innocent. It remains for you to prove your assertion."

The old man was silenced for a moment, but he quickly recovered himself.

"Very well," he said, "despise me if you choose. I shall be able to bear up under your contempt easily enough. My own good opinion will be sufficient for me. I have been angry, it is true enough. I have spoken about you in anger, and have tried to revenge myself. I shall deny nothing that I have done. And yet I do not hate you, — it only depends on you to have me for a friend."

"Confess before you beg for absolution," cried Marcel; "what has happened? what have you been doing? Tell us."

"What has happened? This is what has happened. *Mordi!* Chance helped me to gratify my anger. The Dowager d'Estrelle applied to me to do her a service. Two or three days before her husband's death I was asked to call upon her. I had known her long ago in connection with some land that she sold me, and cheap enough too. She was not so good a business woman then as now. Well, I went. She said to me: 'My husband cannot last long, as every one knows. I am his heir, but I will not pay his son's debts unless the countess surrenders her dower to me, and I want to buy up the debts so as to force her to do this. Furnish me the money, and you shall have part of the spoils. I will pay you for the accommodation.' So I answered: 'Pardon me, madam, I want myself to show that lady that she is in my power; but I want, also, to be in a position to forgive her if I should choose.' Says she: 'Ah, what! What have you against her?' And says I: 'Just what I have.' 'But what is it?' 'No matter.' 'Tell me—' and so forth. In short, to come to an end of the matter, from one word to the other, I did finally tell her the whole story; I said that I had wanted to be a friend to the countess, and had been treated like a pirate, and that the

reason was she had been influenced by the intrigues of Madame André Thierry, who wanted to marry her son to a great lady, out of vanity, and to get others in the same fix with herself, — like the fox who had his tail cut off, in the story. The marchioness was pleased to find out all this, and she led me on to say perhaps more than I meant to, especially as I found it agreeable to tell her about my troubles. Finally, when she had got it all out of me, she said: 'M. Thierry, we must let this splendid marriage go on; it suits me!' And said I: 'But it doesn't suit me!' 'What! In love at your age? — angry? — jealous! — who would have believed it?' 'No, madam, I am not in love at my age; but at my age one does not like to be fooled, and I have been fooled. I am not a bad man, but I have power, and I mean it to be understood. It does not suit me to proceed against her myself; but, if it amuses you to torment her, do it; plague her well! When you have got through, if she asks my pardon, I will forgive her.' 'Very good,' the marchioness said, 'I swear to abide by this understanding with you in good faith; so advance me the money. Here is my note of hand, and you have my word besides.' She sent for me again after the old marquis was buried. I had plenty of fine stories by that time about the doings in this house; I told her all of them, and the idea of bringing down the pride of the countess pleased us both. The dowager said to me then: 'Now revenge yourself; I mean to follow her to the uttermost.' But I always answered: 'Go on, but keep me informed. I shall redeem the property, if she will reform.' Now you understand; madam dowager deceived me, but I got here in time. That breaks up all my arrangements with her. She is a crafty woman, but she shall pay me for it, — that's all!"

"You have not told the whole, uncle. There was some other question discussed between you. You said to her just now, 'It only depends upon you to arrange all these matters.'"

"Oh, that's my business. It has nothing to do with you at all."

"Excuse me; and in what an angry tone she answered, *Never!*"

"She's an old fool!"

"But really, what did she mean?"

"Why? Go to the devil, will you? Mind your own business!"

"Confess the truth, then; you have some other project on foot."

"I tell you I have not."

Marcel persisted that he had.

"It is all perfectly clear to me, uncle," he said; "unable to marry a countess, you took it into your head to marry a marchioness. In fact, it was a much more reasonable plan than your first one: the age and the fortune of the marchioness are suited to yours; but I see that you have failed in that quarter also. She encouraged you, lured you on, for the sake of obtaining a little money; and all the while she was working secretly, and without your knowledge, to get possession of the property of the countess. If you had come a few minutes later, she would have accomplished her designs, and you would neither have been married nor revenged."

Antoine listened to this expostulation with his head down. He seemed to be meditating; but from under his eyebrows he looked at Madam d'Estrelle, and saw her surprise, and the ironical smile which she could not conceal.

"As for not being married to that sharper of an old woman," he said at last, rising, "I thank God for my escape. But as for my revenge, I intend to have it. The devil shall not rob me of it."

"What is it to be?" said Julie, calmly.

"Who said that it was going to be against you?" cried uncle Antoine, whose tongue always broke loose when there was least occasion to expect it; "I have known three women in my life, and they have all laughed at me, as if I were a little boy. Women indeed! They don't know any better! The first was Madam André Thierry, who called me her brother and friend, and so gave me confidence. You were the second, — you who called me your good friend and dear neighbor, so as to

get me to give your lover a fortune; and the third, — oh! that one called me her dear monsieur and her excellent creditor, — and she is the worst of all the three, for she only wanted to pluck me, — the miserly old thing! Consequently I shall make her pay for both the others. As for you, Madam d'Estrelle, I pardon and excuse you! Love makes people commit great follies, but, at all events, it is love; a sort of infatuation which, as it would seem, confuses the brain and disables the reason. So be it, madam! Give me your friendship again, and do not talk any longer of marrying either me or *the other one*. I wish you nothing but good; and I shall prevent you from having my nephew the painter, because my nephew the painter has not done what was right by me, and because it is not suitable for you to marry a painter."

"There, then!" interrupted Marcel, "you were just beginning to talk sense, and now your mania has seized you again. You seem to be really insane upon that point. Who the devil suggested it to you?"

"It is time for this discussion to end," said Julie; "you and I, M. Marcel, do not understand each other. Perfectly sincere in my intentions, — which I avowed plainly enough in your presence to the marchioness, — I am tired of seeming to feign. Listen to me, therefore: I declare to both of you, that my marriage to Julien Thierry is agreed upon and sworn to beyond recall. Yes, Marcel, you are to be my cousin! Yes, M. Antoine, you are to be my uncle! All your information was perfectly correct, and you can pay your spies liberally. And now that I have made this declaration, you will understand that I must withdraw the harsh expressions that I have used in referring to your conduct towards me. Whatever that conduct may have been, respect for a kinsman will keep me silent. You are free to abuse me, to slander me, to rob me. I will not reply, but neither will I entreat your forbearance. I have done nothing for which to ask your forgiveness, and, if you reduce me to poverty, you will only increase my esteem and gratitude towards him who, even under such circumstances, is willing to be my guardian and protector."

Marcel was too surprised to speak. His uncle looked at him with an expression of triumph; but when he saw how genuine his astonishment was, he became more gloomy and irritated than ever at the idea of being defied to his face by Madam d'Estrelle.

"It is decided, then," he said, rising; "you are resolved: you will not even listen to my final propositions?"

"By no means," cried Marcel. "State them. For my part, I do not approve Madam d'Estrelle's determination, and I declare to you plainly that I shall oppose this marriage with all my power. Speak, uncle; furnish me with arguments."

"You are right, for once," said M. Antoine; "but she don't think so! See how contemptuous she is; see with what an obstinate, scornful look she turns her head away! — Oh, she is worthy to be the niece of my-sister-in-law,—she will treat me just as she did! Tell her yourself, Marcel, what I propose to do, provided she will give up her dauber of tulips! I will give her a release from all her debts; I will leave her in possession of her hotel, her garden, her pavilion, her diamonds, her farm du Beauvoisis; in short, of all her property."

"Stay, stay!" said Marcel to Julie, as she was about to reply.

"No," exclaimed Julie; "I will accept nothing from a person who speaks of Julien and Madam Thierry with such aversion and contempt. I do not mind the injury he has done me. I pardon monsieur for having exposed me to the sarcasms and insults of the marchioness, and her circle; but the enemies of those whom I love can never be my friends, and I reject their benefits as an insult."

"Wait, wait until you hear all!" cried M. Antoine, stamping upon the floor. "Are you possessed by a devil? You think I mean to ruin your friends. Not at all; I shall give them the house at Sèvres, which belongs to me yet, if you please; I will secure them an income and a good part of my inheritance, for my property is to be divided among yourself, Julien, and this ass of a lawyer here! I

propose to make you all rich and happy, on one single condition; and that is, that the pavilion be vacated instantly, and that you all swear upon your honor, and sign your names to the oath, that Madam d'Estrelle will never see Julien again."

This time it was Julie who was struck dumb. Although there was really something of insanity in this inexorable old man, there was also a sort of fierce grandeur in the magnificent way in which he accepted any sacrifice necessary to secure the success of his jealousy. He showed great shrewdness, moreover, in putting Madam d'Estrelle in a position where, if she ventured to oppose him, Julien's interests, Madam Thierry's, and Marcel's, would be sacrificed. Marcel, however, determined not to be made use of in any way, hastened to reply, with great dignity and nobility:

"Uncle," he said to M. Antoine, "you will make such future arrangements in regard to me as you may see fit. You know me too well to imagine that any expectations of the kind would weigh against my conscience. I said, a moment ago, that I did not approve of Madam d'Estrelle's determination, and it will be my duty to submit to her certain suggestions upon the subject. But understand me at once: if she is not persuaded by my arguments, I shall never hint to her that her resistance has injured me with you; my conduct shall never be influenced by a regard for my own interests. Lastly, if she and Julien shall persist in their intention of marrying, I will assist them in every possible way with my advice, my services; I will be eternally their friend, their kinsman, and their obedient servant."

Julie silently held out her hand to the lawyer. Her eyes were full of tears. She looked at Antoine, but could read nothing but immovable obstinacy in his horny and copper-colored visage.

"Let us go to Madam Thierry and Julien," she said, rising; "it is for them to decide."

"Not by any means!" cried M. Antoine. "I'll have no one taken unawares. At first, I know very well that the painter will play the great man, and that his mother

will put on her grand airs. Besides, they will be ashamed to yield before madame: it will not do to be less proud than she; although they repent an hour afterwards, they will say exactly what she does. I will wait for my answer until to-morrow, and I will come here to receive it. In the meanwhile, lawyer, carry my final proposition to your protégées, and you, my beautiful friend, reflect upon it also. We shall see whether you four will agree to refuse both my present gifts, and my future bequests. Good-day, Madam d'Estrelle. To-morrow, at this place, at noon!"

As he went out, Julie, pale and exhausted, fell back upon her chair. He returned a moment after he had gone out of the room, and looked in at her. Certain that he had succeeded in breaking down even her pride and courage, he departed in triumph.

VII.

MARCEL was a prudent man; this was his natural disposition, and his professional career had strengthened it. It is possible to be both practical and generous. It was under the influence of both these sentiments that he considered the position of the two lovers, and argued with Julie.

"Madam," he said, taking her hand with an affectionate good-will, in which there was nothing offensive, "to begin with, I must be left out of the account in this whole business. Provided Julien and his mother are as courageous and devoted as you are, instead of dissuading them from making the sacrifice in question, I shall admire it. And, at the outset, do not exaggerate the consequences of your present determination upon the future. M. Antoine is undoubtedly a man of his word; both in good and evil he does as he agrees. It is impossible, however, to conjecture anything about the provisions of his will, since he may marry at any moment. It is certainly strange to

see an old bachelor, — a hater of women and of love, — seized, in his declining years, with a rage for matrimony. But for the very reason that it is a sort of monomania, no promises or resolutions that he may make will save him. He will find, without doubt, what he is looking for; some woman with a title, no matter whether young or old, respectable or otherwise, handsome or ugly, will be tempted by his money, and will get possession of all his estate. This simplifies the question, since we need not take the final division of the property among ourselves into consideration. We can only reckon on present arrangements as certain; and in these, you know, I am not a party. Let us examine, then, the questions immediately before us. These are important enough. I know uncle Antoine; he will do what he proposes within twenty-four hours, or not at all. He will come here to-morrow with his papers all ready, — drafted by himself; and, in spite of the rudeness of his style, not one iota requisite to make them perfectly valid in law (which he understands better than I do) will be omitted. It is by no means likely that you will be required to make a formal rupture with this or that person, — such a stipulation would be strange and unknown to the law, — but you will have to bind yourself not to marry again without M. Antoine's consent, and a clause in the grant will make it revocable in case you violate this condition. It would be in vain, therefore, to hope to evade the proposed agreement; and, in any event, your character is a sufficient guarantee that you would not think of attempting such a thing."

"You are quite right, my friend," said Julie, with a sigh, "I will never make a promise without keeping it."

"Very well, then," continued Marcel, "the project submitted to us is unprecedented; but it has actually been formed, it cannot be evaded, and it will determine the destiny of two persons most dear to you, — Julien and his mother. I myself, as I explained, am not involved in this business. You are bound to consider it most seriously. Do you prefer to think it over by yourself, or may I say plainly to you all that I would have said, if

you had made me your confidant before the appearance of M. Antoine?"

"Go on, Marcel; it is best to tell me all."

"Let us suppose then, madam, that M. Antoine, in spite of his anger, makes you a better offer than the marchioness: your means will even then be very moderate; you will have, perhaps, an income of two or three thousand francs a year! You marry Julien, who has nothing to depend upon except his labor; you will have children, and you will have Madam Thierry to support. You will be able to keep a maid for her, a nurse for yourself, and a man-of-all-work, — unless Julien himself lays down his brush to do the drudgery that is necessary even in the most modest household. You will live respectably, no doubt, for Julien will work; Madam Thierry will knit all the stockings of the family, and you will be economical. You can afford one silk dress, and will commonly wear calico. You will go about on foot; you can't even allow yourself a bow of ribbon without counting on your fingers to see if you can afford it. That is the way my wife began when I bought my practice, and I assure you, madam, that we did not enjoy it much, although we were very fond of each other. My wife was not a frivolous woman; we had never been in easy circumstances, and were unacquainted with luxury. We knew very well how to be sparing, but we were both of us troubled. My wife was anxious at seeing me working half the night, and running about at all hours and in all weathers, tired to death, and with a cold in the head. I was anxious at seeing her shut up without fresh air and good food, and harnessed, without intermission, to the housework and to her responsibilities as a mother. This solicitude for each other was a constant and wearing burden. I give you my word, that the more we loved each other the more tormented we were, and prevented from enjoying real happiness. We lost our first two children. One we were obliged to put out to nurse in the country, and it was not well cared for; the other we tried to bring up at home, and it died in consequence of the bad air of Paris, together with the feeble health which it inherited from its

mother. If we have contrived to keep our third alive, it is because, by economy and industry, we have succeeded in making ourselves a little more comfortable. At present we are contented, and are quite well off; but we are forty years old, and we have suffered a great deal! Our youth was always a warfare, and often a martyrdom. Such is the life of a poor citizen in Paris, madam; and that of a poor artist is harder still, because his profession is far less sure than mine. People are always having questions of business to decide that bring them to a lawyer; they are not always in want of pictures, and most people care nothing about them. They are superfluities. Julien will never amass a fortune, as his father did. His talents and his character, perhaps, will be more highly estimated, but he has not the amiable frivolity, — the social tastes and brilliant manners necessary to make him a favorite in certain circles, which, when they fall in love with an artist, have the power to bring him forward, and insure his reputation and success. You must remember that my uncle André would never have gained the position he held, in spite of his genius, if he had not been a capital singer, a great wit, and a good story-teller; and moreover, if certain frivolous but influential ladies had not, at various times, tempted him from his allegiance to his wife. He adored her, notwithstanding; but he used to say, confidentially and very frankly, that he must deceive her a little once in a while, for his own advantage. You turn pale; Julien will never follow that example, for it belongs to a past age. But even if Julien should create *chef-d'œuvres* of art, he will always be poor. The world does not run after modest merit, nor does it take the trouble to seek after unknown virtue. His marrying you will, it is true, make some noise, — it will be a little scandal that will do something towards bringing him into notice. That was the case with his father's marriage, but, as I said, the times are changed. Nowadays people are more austere, — or more hypocritical, — than in the time of Madame de la Pompadour. And then the same thing never succeeds twice over. People will say, 'That young fellow has been trying to ape his father,' and you will bring him more

enemies than protectors. Against you there will be a great outcry. I do not suppose that the old marchioness will try to have you thrown into a convent, and Julien into the Bastile, for the crime of mésalliance, for she has no authority over you; but she will do you even greater harm by talking against you, while you will not have a rigorous persecution to help make you interesting. You are well known as a person of virtuous character, and that very fact will make the feeling against you more violent and implacable. All the old prudes will go about saying that such marriages are becoming altogether too common, — that they must be put down, and utterly discountenanced. Even the literary people, — and some of them are good friends of Julien, — will not dare defend you. They themselves belong to good society nowadays; instead of being persecuted, they are fêted and caressed; Paris is excited yet over the triumph that was granted to M. de Voltaire after his long exile. People laugh at Jean Jacques Rousseau for fancying himself the victim of a conspiracy; he could have lived, they say, comfortably and respectably, if it had not been for his sour disposition and diseased mind. The philosophers take the wall of everybody now, and they are very careful no longer to attack people's prejudices; while those who remain of the great crusade of free-thinkers will neither mend their pens nor open their mouths for the sake of defending you against the verdict of the drawing-rooms. And all these cowardly insults will strike Julien. He will live in constant uneasiness and apprehension; he will quarrel with all his friends, and probably will fight some of them — "

"Enough, enough, Marcel," cried Julie, weeping, "I see plainly how foolish I have been: I have taken counsel of a selfish passion, or rather have acted without understanding social necessities. I see now what a burden I should be to Julien; that his marriage to me would expose him to constant danger, and fill his whole life with bitterness. Ah, Marcel, you have broken my heart! But it was your duty to do so, and I esteem you the more for your courage. Go and tell Julien that I wish our en-

gagement broken. *Mon Dieu!* How can I tell him so?"

"Julien will not believe you. Eager to suffer for your sake, he will smile at your generous magnanimity. He has courage, and force of character, and I have no doubt that he adores you. If you consult him he will instantly cry, 'Let us be true to our love at whatever cost, in spite of misery, in spite of persecution!' He will have no misgivings about himself; and his mother, — who is as courageous and disinterested as he is, — will uphold him in his determination. But imagine Julien a year or two hence, when he sees his mother suffering! It is by unheard-of efforts even now that he keeps her from actual poverty; and in spite of him and of herself, — in spite of all their mutual forbearance, — there can be no doubt that she does suffer. Madam Thierry is an enthusiast, not a stoic. She was not brought up to any employment, and all she is fitted for is to sit comfortably in her arm-chair and knit or read. Besides, her health was always delicate. She could never stand on her feet until midnight to finish ironing her son's shirts, as my wife could do; her pretty hands know as little about hard work as yours. How will it be, then, when Julien shall have a wife and children? He will reproach himself with your unhappiness; and if remorse once gain admission into so proud a heart as his, farewell to courage, and perhaps even to the ability to work in his profession!"

"My dear Marcel, I told you that you had said enough. Advise me; direct me. Give your orders, and I will obey. You think I ought not even to see him and speak to him."

"I think so, most certainly, my dear countess. He must not know anything about what has just happened; he must receive M. Antoine's gifts without suspecting the conditions upon which they are granted. Otherwise, he would refuse them."

"Marcel," said the countess, rising, and ringing the bell, "I must leave my home at once, and never return to it."

The servant entered.

"Send for a carriage," she said, "and tell Camille that I want her."

"I shall take nothing with me," she continued to Marcel. "You must make it your duty to pay off the servants, and to send after me such of my things as may be necessary."

"But where will you go?"

"Into some convent out of Paris. It makes no difference, as long as you alone know where I am."

Camille made her appearance. Julie put on her mantle, and when she had left the room continued:

"It must be, my friend. Madam Thierry will be anxious to know what has happened, and will come to inquire; if I stay a single moment longer, I may see her. And even if I could deceive her, in the evening, — ah! in the evening Julien will wait for me in the garden; and when he sees that I do not join him, he cannot help coming to rap at my window. I could never have the strength to leave him in mortal anxiety, and I could not utter an untruth to him. No, no, — let us go away. There is the carriage in the court-yard. Come, let me not lose what little courage I have."

Marcel felt that she was right, and offered her his arm.

"Come, madam," he said; "it is God who inspires you, and He will support you!"

They drove off, pretty much at random; the countess gave the coachman the address, first of one convent and then of another, without really knowing where she wished to go. Marcel at last bethought him of a cousin of his family who was at the Ursulines, at Chaillot, and suggested that institution. They went there, and he himself arranged for her accommodation; paying for a week's board and lodging in advance, with an understanding that the lady, if satisfied, was to have the privilege of remaining longer. Julie assumed the name of Madam d'Erlange. Marcel charged his cousin to vouch for her, and see that she was properly cared for, but did not admit her into their confidence. As Julie entered the convent merely as a boarder, she had the privilege of

seeing Marcel in her room, where she gave him her final instructions.

"In any event," she said, "I will not accept any favors from M. Antoine; they would be odious to me, and I no longer need his assistance. Since he is my only creditor, let him sell all my property, and pay himself in full. I will retain nothing, except my twelve hundred francs a year; and as I intend to live alone, that will be quite enough. Do not let him reserve my furniture for me, or send me my diamonds, — I will not accept them. He may draw up the engagement himself, stating that I will never marry. I will sign it, in return for the conveyance which he is to execute to Madam Thierry of the house at Sèvres, and of an income whose amount you shall act for me in adjusting. You are also to stipulate that neither Madam Thierry nor her son are to be informed of any of the facts about me. You can tell them that I am gone, that I cannot see them, that I do not wish to do so, because — Ah, *mon Dieu!* what can you tell them? I do not know. Tell them whatever you choose, but let it be irrevocable, without being cruel; do not torment them with false hopes, for they are weakening, and it is agonizing to wake from them. Tell them — tell them nothing — Ah! I can neither think nor wish any longer — my strength is all gone!"

"I will consider what to say," said Marcel; "I will think it over as I return. I leave you in despair, and yet I must go. My duty for the present is to get you settled here, to keep Julien from being frightened out of his senses at your disappearance, and to reassure your servants, who will be waiting for you, and who, when they see that you do not return, may make inconvenient inquiries or observations. Come, madam, be heroic! Be calm; I will return this evening, — sooner if possible, — and will try and bring you some comfortable news from the pavilion. I must deceive Julien in some way, but how, I don't know any more than you do. Good-by; wait for me; don't write to anybody. It would not do for us to be contradicting each other. You will weep

bitterly. I have pained you terribly, my poor friend, and now I must leave you alone. It is frightful!"

As he spoke, Marcel wept without knowing it. Touched by this evidence of his grief and devotion, Julie assumed an appearance of fortitude that she did not possess, and urged him to depart. But as soon as he had gone, she locked herself up, threw herself upon her poor little bed, hid her face, and weeping, sobbing, wringing her hands, abandoned herself to her grief, until she lost all consciousness of where she was, and of the events that had so suddenly torn her from her home and former associations.

Marcel, when he reëntered the coach, wiped his eyes, reproached himself for his weakness, and tried to reason himself out of it.

"What we resolve," he said, "we must have courage to perform."

He had one last hope that he had not mentioned to Julie, — that of changing M. Antoine's resolution. To him, therefore, he went first of all, but his sensible arguments and heartfelt eloquence fell alike upon a deaf ear. The selfish old man was happy and triumphant. He was draining his sweet draught of vengeance, enjoying it, and did not mean to leave a drop at the bottom of the goblet. They both gave vent to stormy reproaches and invectives, but Marcel could not change his resolution; he consented at last, — and this was the only concession he would agree to, — that Julien and his mother should remain ignorant of the cruel bargain that was to purchase their prosperity.

"You will find it difficult, as it is, to carry out your scheme," said Marcel; "take care, or you will make it impossible. Madam d'Estrelle is the only one who has consented to it as yet. Julien would have refused. You must deceive him, or else you will gain no advantage from Julie's submission."

"I'm tired to death of your Julie!" cried M. Antoine. "Much she has to complain of; a woman to whom I am giving everything, — fortune, position, and liberty!"

"Yes, the liberty to die of sorrow!"

"Nonsense! Do people die of love? That is fine talk for a lawyer! Let her marry to suit herself in her own rank of life; I will make no opposition, — she may select whom she pleases. I object to no one, except the dauber. Before a fortnight has passed, she will have opened her eyes, and will thank me. She will acknowledge my greatness of soul, and will call me her benefactor. The fact is, that you are all crazy together. I take hundreds of thousands of francs out of my pocket, and fling them about to a lot of ungrateful fools, and they turn around and call me a bad relative, a hard-hearted fellow, an old dog, an old miser, and I don't know what besides. Upon my word of honor, the whole world seems to be crazy, at present."

"Nobody has called you those names, uncle; nobody has called you any names at all. There is no name that would describe your extraordinary character; and no other man in the world has found out the secret of making people curse the hand that enriches them."

"Come, you are making a speech; you imagine you are in court. Go along, you bore me! Tell your Julien whatever you please. I don't want to see either him, or you, or anybody. I am going back into the country."

"That means that you are going to shut yourself up here, and barricade yourself against all the good reasons that I could give you."

"Possibly. Now you know what a fine time your good reasons will have waiting outside the door."

Marcel took good care not to tell his uncle that there was a far simpler and cheaper way than the one he had adopted of preventing the marriage to which he was so violently opposed: that, namely, of allowing Madam d'Estrelle to lose her fortune, and trusting to the influence of her own prudent and generous reflections. Nor did he consider it his duty to tell him that she had refused his gift.

"After all," he thought to himself, "who knows how long this passion will last? Julie may, perhaps, recover from it after a time; and, in that event, she will not be displeased to find herself at liberty, and wealthy."

He drew up, along with M. Antoine, a simple conditional release of all Madam d'Estrelle's debts, and succeeded in having this important modification inserted in the document, that, *except with a person not bearing a title*, Madam d'Estrelle was free to contract a second marriage with any one she chose. After M. Antoine had signed this paper, Marcel put it into his pocket, quietly resolving that he would not submit it to the countess, until she should be more calm.

The conveyance of the house at Sèvres to Julien and his mother, together with an income of five thousand francs, was in readiness. Marcel had a terrible struggle to prevent Antoine from inserting a restriction in this paper, similar to the one by which Julie was bound. He remonstrated that as she had promised not to marry Julien, it was entirely useless to make him promise not to marry her.

"But your Julie may take it into her head to renounce her fortune," said M. Antoine; "and then, if the other has enough to live upon, I shall have accomplished a pretty piece of work! I shall have married them! By no means! I must have a letter from that lady, in which she promises, solemnly and religiously, never in all her life to see that personage again. It must all be stated in so many words. Women think there's a great deal more in their little gilt-edged notes, than in all your parchments. They are a great deal more afraid of scandal than of the law. Yes, I must have that little love-letter sent to my address, or I will do nothing."

"You shall have it," said Marcel.

He left, and hastened to the pavilion.

Julien had not ventured to seek any information at the hotel, and he was very much agitated. His mother had gone to reconnoitre, and had reported that the house was entirely closed on the side of the garden. He did not know whether the dowager was still there; he knew nothing of M. Antoine's visit, or of Julie's departure. After confiding in Madam Thierry so fully, he was astonished that she could not find time to send her a few lines, in order to set her at ease about the consequences of the

dowager's scandalous proceedings. He was anxiously waiting for the evening, and dark suspicions were beginning to creep into his mind.

"Who knows," he thought, "whether the dowager and M. Antoine have not joined in a conspiracy to have Julie carried off and confined in a convent, on a charge of misdemeanor?"

It was no longer easy to obtain *lettres de cachet*; but, by means of certain formalities, an *ex-post facto* judgment could be procured, and an unlawful imprisonment legalized. This would have been quite practicable in the present case, since a love affair with a plebeian was still considered among the ruling classes a scandal such as a family of rank might rightfully punish.

By the time Marcel arrived, Julien was almost out of his senses. Madam Thierry looked troubled and dejected. Marcel saw that this was not the moment to speak plainly.

"There is news," he began, assuming a calm, and even satisfied expression. "We were just about to sign, when uncle Antoine appeared amongst us, like a god out of the clouds at the opera. He got angry, and had a quarrel with the dowager, who up to that moment had had some understanding with him against the interests of Madam d'Estrelle. This showed him his mistake. He has repented of all his foolishness, and offers you a splendid indemnity; indeed he is going to seize this occasion to make up for all his shortcomings, and I must say that he is acting with great disinterestedness. I hope you will feel kindly towards him, not only on account of his offer to you, but for his handsome proposition to Madam d'Estrelle. He will pay her probably double the amount offered by the dowager. He behaved so well, indeed, that she considered it her duty to thank him, and to leave the hotel at once, in compliance with his wish."

"She is gone?" cried Julien, turning pale.

"Certainly! She has gone to stay a few days in the country. What is there surprising in that?"

"Ah, Marcel," said Madam Thierry, "you evidently do not know —"

"I do not desire to know anything outside of the very important concerns that require all my attention," replied Marcel, with decision. "I have listened to-day to a great many foolish remarks, to a great many injurious and impertinent insinuations; but I do not intend either to believe or to remember any of them. The name of Madam d'Estrelle is a sacred one to me; but I have advised her to keep out of sight for a few days."

"Keep out of sight?" repeated Julien, whose apprehensions still continued.

"*Parbleu!* One would suppose that we were in Madrid, and that somebody had been buried alive in the convent cellar. Why are you so tragic about it? I have only persuaded her to be dead, so to speak, for a week or two, until I can ascertain the state of her affairs, and adjust them. Let us be entirely quiet, and show neither dissatisfaction nor uneasiness about her absence. Why should we revive the evil designs of the marchioness, just as M. Antoine has succeeded, for the moment, in baffling them? Above all, we must be careful not to act in such a way as to deprive Julie of the protection and regard of our rich old friend. There is no need of undertaking to explain that gentleman's singular mode of reasoning, for the devil himself could not do it. We can, however, take advantage of his peculiarities; and no one here ought to think about himself. The point is, to consider the good of Madam d'Estrelle."

Marcel now went into details, and referred to figures which compelled Julien's attention. He showed that Julie, by acting with prudence, could secure a modest competence, and that, by displaying too much pride, she would lose it. So far, the plot formed against her by M. Antoine and the marchioness had come to nothing; they had been waiting until she should provoke its explosion by trying to resist the dowager's claim. It was M. Antoine's duty to protect Julie against the accusations which he himself had originated; and he was the only person who could do this, since his wealth provided him with sufficient resources against the common enemy. He showed a disposition to do what was right, he was repentant, after

his fashion · he had come to hate the marchioness, and all that he asked was to be allowed to manage the whole matter himself. It was absolutely necessary to acquiesce, and to wait silently upon his movements.

Julien was not altogether satisfied with this explanation; one thing still troubled him. Was not M. Antoine trying to influence Madam d'Estrelle's plans, and to get the control of her property, with the extravagant idea of entrapping her into a marriage with himself? Marcel reassured him entirely upon this point; he gave him his word of honor that the old sphinx had altogether abandoned this project. Lastly, Julien asked Marcel whether he could also give him his word that he had advised Julie to depart thus suddenly; whether she was able to come back whenever she should see fit; and if she was perfectly convinced that her absence would be advantageous to herself, and to herself exclusively.

Marcel could conscientiously reply that all this was so.

"You know, of course, where she is," continued Julien.

"I do," replied Marcel; "but I cannot tell, for she made me promise not to. If she chooses to inform any one else, she will write; but as she desires to keep M. Antoine and the dowager entirely ignorant of her whereabouts my opinion is that she had better have no confidant except me. And now that I have explained everything, let me tell you what compensation M. Antoine proposes to give you for resigning your lease."

"Wait one moment," said Julien; "was this compensation insisted on by Madam d'Estrelle? Is it not the price of some additional torment inflicted upon her high spirit, or of some sacrifice on her part?"

"There was no discussion whatever about it," said Marcel; "M. Antoine stated his intentions himself, without waiting for any one to make any demands, or to propose any conditions. It is probable that he has intended for a long time to endow you with this property, for he owns the house at Sèvres, and he gives it to you. Here are the deeds."

"Ah, *mon Dieu!*" cried Madam Thierry, looking at the papers, "and an income too! It seems like a dream, — I am both rejoiced and alarmed!"

"Yes," said Julien, who was still suspicious, "there is something back of all this; some trap, perhaps."

Marcel had a great deal of trouble in making them accept the perfidious gift of M. Antoine; and had to say, and even to give his oath to it, that such was the express desire of Madam d'Estrelle. Before he left them, however, they had become quite composed. Julien was still anxious, but he concealed his apprehensions, so as not to disturb his mother's joy at the idea of returning to the home where she had lived so long and so happily. Marcel now hurried to the hotel d'Estrelle, and directed Camille to pack up whatever her mistress would need for a short stay in the country.

"Ah, *mon Dieu!*" exclaimed Camille, in surprise; "and did not the countess send for me to come and join her?"

"It is unnecessary, for so short a time."

"But madame does not know how to put up her hair, nor how to dress herself! Why, think of it! A person who has always been waited upon according to her rank."

"She will find servants enough in the house where she is staying."

"They must be poor people, at all events, if madame thinks they can't afford to keep her servants for her. Perhaps she is quite ruined herself. Oh dear, oh dear! Such a kind and generous mistress."

Camille began to cry, and her grief was perfectly sincere; but she added, notwithstanding, —

"And my wages, Mr. Attorney; who will pay me?"

"I will pay everything to-morrow," said Marcel, who had often witnessed similar demonstrations of sensibility mingled with prudential considerations, — a state of mind that is naturally developed by sudden disasters. "Have all the accounts of the household made out, and do you take the keys until then. Be responsible for everything until to-morrow."

"Very well, monsieur, I will," answered the lady's maid, beginning to sob again; "but are we to leave madam's employment? Is she not coming back at all?"

"I did not say that, and I have received no orders to dismiss you."

Marcel sent word to his wife that he would have no time to return either to dinner or supper, and that she need not expect him until ten or eleven at night. Then he went back to the convent. Julie, after pouring out all her life in tears, had risen, and bathed her face in water; but it was pale and cold as marble. She was very quiet and depressed in manner, and seemed like a dead person moving about. She revived a little on learning that Marcel had succeeded in misleading Julien, and in quieting his suspicions sufficiently to induce him to accept the means of living that M. Antoine had conveyed to his mother and himself. At Marcel's request, and under his dictation, she wrote a note to M. Antoine, engaging never to see Julien again as long as she lived, on condition that the house at Sèvres, and the annuity, should never be taken from him. She would not make any similar condition about her own property, and Marcel did not yet venture to speak to her about accepting M. Antoine's release from her debts. For the rest, she made no complaint, but looked worn out with fatigue; and when he took her hand, Marcel perceived that she was feverish. He persuaded her to see his cousin, sister Sainte-Juste, and arranged with the latter to have someone sleep in the next room; nor did he leave until, in the most fatherly manner, he had make every arrangement for her comfort.

Julie had a quiet night; she was not one of those strong natures that can maintain a long struggle. Her conscience told her that she had done her duty, and her first passionate outburst of sorrow had been so sudden and violent, that she very soon yielded to exhaustion, and fell asleep. The next morning, after thanking the person who had watched near her, she stated that she wished to be alone, and sent her away. She made her own toilette,

and finding that she was a little awkward in performing this unaccustomed task, she resolved to form new habits, and went to work at once to clear up her room, make her bed, put her things in order, and establish herself in this poor little cell, as if she had expected to spend all her life there. All this she did almost mechanically, and without either effort or reflection.

When everything was arranged, she sat down in a chair, with her hands clasped on her lap, and remained for a long time looking out of the open window, without seeing anything, listening to the convent bells without paying any attention to them, and not even remembering to eat, although she had not taken anything for twenty-four hours. A clap of thunder, exploding in the very room, would not have made her tremble.

Towards noon, sister Sainte-Juste came in, and found her absorbed in a melancholy reverie, which she mistook for a state of beatitude. Some natures, when crushed by affliction, are so sweet and gentle, that their actual suffering is unsuspected. The sister, however, in passing through the little room that served as Julie's ante-chamber and dining-room, noticed that the breakfast which the servant had brought had grown cold, without being touched.

"But you have forgotten to eat anything," she said to Julie.

"No, my sister," replied the poor desolate creature, unwilling to complain; "I was waiting until my appetite should return."

The nun persuaded her to sit down at the table, waited upon her very kindly, and tried to divert her with her own simple and insignificant gossip. Julie listened with inexhaustible patience, and even exerted herself to show an interest in all the minutiæ of the recluse's life, in the details of the establishment, in all the stupid little events with which nuns in such a community occupy their leisure. What difference did it make whether she listened to that or to something else? Nobody could annoy or fatigue her any more. Her soul seemed perfectly void, and was incapable of receiving a new impression.

When Marcel came again in the afternoon, his cousin said to him, —

"What made you tell me that this lady was ill, and in trouble? She slept well, and without a sound; she breakfasted reasonably well, although rather late, and she showed great interest in conversing with me. She is very amiable, and is not seriously unhappy. I will answer for that — I know about such matters!"

Marcel was alarmed at this patient sorrow incapable of reaction. He had come to tell her what had happened that morning at the hotel d'Estrelle; but she made no inquiries, excepting about Julien and his mother. On learning that they had moved, and would sleep that night at Sèvres, she was satisfied, and refused to hear anything more.

"I do not want to hate anybody," she said; "such a feeling would only injure me, and would do no good. Do not, therefore, say anything more to me about M. Antoine for several days. I beseech you, my friend, let me reconcile myself to my lot as I best can. You see that I do not rebel against it. That is as much as is necessary."

As time went on, she became more and more quiet. She was extremely pale; but the nun assured Marcel, and with truth, that she ate and slept sufficiently. She did nothing all day, and disliked to see any one, but constantly affirmed, — and truly again, — that she did not suffer from ennui. Absorbed in thought, she was patient and serene. Marcel could not understand anything about such a case. He persuaded her to see the physician of the convent, and he reported that her pulse was a little feeble, and her complexion a little phlegmatic — an expression used at that time to denote a predominance of lymph in the system. He prescribed quinine, and told Marcel that nothing serious was the matter.

In fact, nothing was the matter, except that her soul was quietly sinking, and her life fading away. She obediently took the quinine, took walks in the convent-garden, consented to receive visits from some of the nuns, who thought her a very nice person, promised to read some new books that Marcel brought her, but which she did not

open, and laid out a piece of embroidery which she did not begin. So extremely quiet were her ways, that she lived almost invisible in the convent, and continued to fade away, slowly, without a crisis of any kind, but steadily.

Marcel was deceived by her apparent tranquillity. Mistaking the sudden destruction of her will for an immense force of will exerted in the struggle to conquer her love, he tried to cure her with mistaken remedies. He occupied himself in endeavoring to restore her physical health. Telling Julie that he had purchased a little country-house at Nanterre, which, in fact, was only rented, he persuaded her to move there; and, satisfied as to Camille's discretion and devotion, sent her there too. He furnished Camille with money enough to hire a good cook, and made arrangements to supply the table of the countess with more delicate and nourishing food than she had had in the convent. The cottage was in a healthy situation, the air was good, and it had quite a large garden, walled, and not too much shaded to prevent the sun from warming it thoroughly. Books, work, innocent games, and Julie's harp (in those days every lady played more or less upon this graceful instrument, and Marcel did not forget to send hers to her new retreat) gave the drawing-room a cheerful aspect. Camille, whom the lawyer had instructed, kept her mistress in ignorance about what had happened at the hotel d'Estrelle, and of the condition of her own property. She made her believe that everything was extremely cheap at Nanterre, and that she might therefore indulge herself in comforts, to a certain extent, without exceeding the amount of her little revenue. Julie chose to be poor, rather than to receive any favors from M. Antoine. On this point, only, Marcel had found her opposition invincible. He had had to tell her a downright falsehood, and to make her believe that M. Antoine had taken possession of her hotel, her diamonds, and all that she owned.

The diamonds, in reality, were safe in Marcel's hands; the hotel was kept in good repair; the horses were in the stable, well groomed and fed, and the carriages in the

coach-house. The servants had been paid off and discharged, but with an understanding that for a certain agreed term they should hold themselves in readiness to return at any time when Madam d'Estrelle herself should come back. The porter had charge of the house, and tended and exercised the horses; his wife dusted, aired, and closed the rooms. M. Antoine's head gardener had charge of the flowers and the turf, and M. Antoine himself made the rounds of the place every morning. The pavilion, deserted by Madam Thierry, was shut up and silent. Otherwise, nothing was changed since Julie's departure. All the furniture was in its place, and the sun shone on the deserted threshold.

Two months thus passed away. Uncle Antoine acted only as the guardian and business superintendent of the hotel. He proposed to retain this office about the place until such time as it should please Julie to resume the management of her property, when he meant to deliver it up to her unchanged, and even to see that any of her household whom she wished to recall should be ready to serve her. The porter had orders to inform visitors that his mistress still retained the ownership of the property temporarily, and had gone to inspect her estates in Beauvoisis, with a view to adjust some final arrangements. In other words, Marcel and M. Antoine, for the sake of appearances, had agreed to represent the situation of Madam d'Estrelle, as the continuation of a truce arranged with her creditors. This state of things had already existed for two years, and it was therefore the best explanation that could be given of her present position. It would be easy enough to find some final statement, when ever the countess should return.

Nevertheless, Julie's friends, the old Duke de Quesnoy, the president's wife, Madame des Morges, the abbé de Nivières, etc., began to feel greatly surprised at not hearing from her. Her sudden departure, — thanks to the reports adroitly circulated by the lawyer, — had been satisfactorily accounted for; but why did she not write? She must be very lazy; or, perhaps, she was ill. Was she really in Beauvoisis? They asked these questions

among themselves, but the old Duke de Quesnoy had to go to the waters of Vichy; the president's wife was absorbed in attending to her daughter's marriage; the abbé was a good deal like a cat, which forgets all about a house when the fire goes out on its hearth, and Madam des Morges was indolence personified. The Marchioness d'Estrelle was the only person who would have made serious inquiries, and her malice was paralyzed by M. Antoine, who threatened sharply to publish an account of her conduct, and reclaim his money, if she entered into any investigation, or ventured to make any unkind remark about Julie.

In all that related to the reputation, the safety, and the pecuniary interests of his victim, it cannot be denied, therefore, that M. Antoine acted with remarkable good faith, prudence, and devotion. He took counsel with Marcel, discussed various plans, as if he were seeking to promote the welfare of his own daughter, and followed his advice with perfect exactitude. But upon the main question of all, — the union of the two lovers, — he was inflexible; Marcel tried, in vain, to soften him. When pressed too hard about it, he got angry, sulked, and shut the door in the lawyer's face; so that, upon this point, Marcel saw nothing in the future but indefinite delays.

Meanwhile, Madam Thierry and Julien were luxuriously established in their pretty little house, where they had found intact most of their furniture, and a number of works of art of great value. The latter M. Antoine was too ignorant to appreciate, and had quite disdained.

Julien felt no confidence in the unexpected generosity of his relative, attended, as it had been, by so many mysterious circumstances, and for which he had been forbidden to thank him. He was so uneasy, indeed, about the whole affair, that he would have refused the gift altogether, if it had not been for the obvious duty of sacrificing his pride to insure his mother's comfort. Materially, they were really well off. The annuity of five thousand francs enabled them to live in a modest way, without waiting every week, in feverish anxiety, for the proceeds of weary labor. Madam Thierry could not help

feeling extreme delight in returning to her own house, her dearest recollections, her old habits and her old acquaintances. The circle that gathered around her was less numerous than in the days when she used to keep an open table, but it was composed of reliable people. Only her true friends sought her out; and, knowing that her income was not large, they took pains to secure a good sale for Julien's pictures. It is only when free from distress that one's talents can be used to advantage. Julien no longer found it necessary to fatigue himself with overwork; patronized by an intelligent and friendly coterie, he achieved, without difficulty, an assured success. When his mother expressed the secret dissatisfaction which she still felt at being under obligation to M. Antoine, he was able to console her.

"Don't be troubled," he said, "I will pay off all that we owe him, and in spite of himself, if necessary. It is only a question of time. Take comfort. You see that I don't allow Julie's absence to make me unhappy, and that I am waiting an explanation of her conduct, confidently and firmly."

Julien had not altered in behavior or manner, — not even the expression of his face had changed, — since the unhappy day of Julie's disappearance. At first, he believed every word that Marcel had told him; but, when he received no letter from the countess, his suspicions began to be aroused. He made inquiries which satisfied him that she was not in Beauvoisis, and gradually began to guess some part of the fatal truth. Julie was free, — there could be no doubt about that, — for Marcel had sworn that she was so, repeatedly. But he refused to swear, or even to affirm anything about her state of feeling; upon that point, everything was left to the artist's conjectures. Marcel persistently refused to be the recipient of his cousin's confidence, and this made it easier for him to elude his questions. The Machiavelian plot of M. Antoine was too strange to occur to a straightforward mind like Julien's. Jealousy, without love, he had never even conceived of; and he would have considered it an insult to Julie, and a sort of sacrilege, to

admit that the old man was in love with her. Nor was the old man in love with her; nothing is more certain than that. And yet, notwithstanding, he was as jealous of Julien as a tiger; and it is true, also, that the most implacable form of jealousy is that which is unaccompanied by love. Julien thought he was insane. Who can conjecture the schemes of a crazy man?

But, whatever these schemes may have been, he was firmly pursuaded that they could not have had any effect upon Julie's resolution.

"No!" he said to himself; "no money consideration could ever have weighed with a heart so noble. Julie wishes to break off her engagement with me; she believes this to be necessary, and, although at the cost of great suffering, she severs the tie in silence. She is apprehensive about her reputation; the marchioness has threatened to destroy it; and her friends have persuaded her that if she marries a plebeian, she can never regain her social position. That is the opinion of the world. Julie believed, for an instant, that she was superior to such prejudices; her love for me made her overestimate her strength. Her character is proud and noble, but her intellect, perhaps, is not very powerful; and, at present, she is exerting all her force of character in favor of prejudices which destroy her love. Poor dear Julie! she must be unhappy, for she has a kind heart, and must feel that I am suffering. But for herself, I am almost certain that she wishes to forget me."

Marcel felt more hopeful about Julien's mental recovery than that of the countess. He saw the young man as seldom and for as short a time as possible, in order to avoid his questions. One day, being obliged to come to the house to report to his aunt on a matter of business with which she had intrusted him, he found her alone.

"Where is Julien?" he asked her; "in his studio?"

"No, he has taken to gardening. It seems to be a consolation to him to sow and plant in this dear plot of ground which we have recovered. He has been in trouble, Marcel, — in far greater trouble than you knew

of. He was in love with Madam d'Estrelle; I was quite right about that; and even —"

"Well, well," said Marcel, who wished to avoid any disclosures, "it is all over now, is it not? There's an end of it?"

"Oh yes," replied the widow, "I believe so. If he has been deceiving me —. No, after all the hopes which he entertained, he could not do so; is it not true, Marcel? He could not deceive the eyes of a mother who adores him?"

"Undoubtedly not. Good-night, and pleasant dreams, aunt! I will go and bid good-day to Julien."

"If he is deceiving his mother after the destruction of his hopes," thought Marcel, as he looked for Julien in the shrubbery, "he's a devilish resolute fellow!"

Julien was digging a trench to transplant some young trees. He had on a linen smock, and was bare-headed. Standing in the loose earth, with his hands resting on the handle of his spade, — like a laborer pausing to take breath, — he was in such a profound reverie that he did not hear Marcel coming; and the latter, seeing his profile, was struck by the expression of his face. The grief which had already altered Julie's beauty had not yet left any traces upon that manly countenance, but he had the same strained expression, — the same look of fixed, melancholy hopelessness, — which Marcel had noticed in her.

When Julien saw his cousin he smiled, but without any start of surprise. It was precisely so, with this same cold, patient smile, that Julie received him; a smile sweet, but terrible, like that which sometimes flits over the lips of the dying.

"That is bad," thought Marcel; "he is devilish resolute, that's the fact; and yet he is, perhaps, the most unhappy of the two."

So distressed did he feel, that he could not hide his emotion. He was very fond of Julien, and his prudence failed him.

"What is the matter?" he said; "you are unhappy!"

"My friend, you know very well that I am unhappy," answered the artist, quitting his spade, and walking

under the trees with his cousin; "how could it possibly be otherwise? You know there is a woman I am in love with, — my mother has told you so. That woman has disappeared. You need not tell me she will return; I know perfectly well that she must return. But I know, also, that I ought never to enter her presence again, — that she is dead to me."

"And — have you the courage to accept your fate?"

"Ah — if it is my duty! You know one always accepts one's duty."

"One submits to it with more or less fortitude; still, a man is a man, and cannot help feeling."

"That is true! I suffer exceedingly, Marcel, but I have kept my disappointment to myself hitherto, and shall continue to do so; you need have no doubt about that. Why, then, do you refuse to help me a little? It seems to me that you might do so. You have been very cruel for the last two months."

"How can I help you?" inquired Marcel, who feared that he would try and persuade him to reveal Julie's retreat.

"*Mon Dieu!*" answered Julien, divining his friend's thoughts, "you can tell me that she's happier than I am. I will ask nothing more of you."

"But how should I know?"

"You see her two or three times a week. Come, my friend, you have done your duty. Proving your devotion to her, and to me also, perhaps, you have endured my distress with a terrible courage. But I have found out some of your secrets. I learned yesterday, from your son, where she is living."

"Julio don't know what he is talking about; he don't know her."

"He saw her one day at the theatre, and, although he don't know her name, — he calls her "the country client," — he has never forgotten her. Her grace and sweetness made a great impression upon him, and he has often talked to me about her."

"Well; go on."

"He went last Sunday to the *fête* at Nanterre, with a

friend of his own age, did he not? You put him under the care of the little fellow's parents."

"Yes, it's true."

"The boys escaped from their elders for a few minutes, and ran about the village. The little rogues were tempted by a tree loaded with fruit, and hanging over a low wall. Julio got upon his comrade's shoulders, reached some of the boughs, and, while he was filling his pockets, saw a woman go by underneath, whom he recognized. I know the street, and made him describe the appearance of the house. Going to Nanterre, I made inquiries, and learned that a Madame d'Erlange (that is Julie, — she has taken an assumed name) was living there with her maid; that she never went out, but was under no sort of surveillance, and was living alone by choice; also, that she was not supposed to be ill, although your son said that she was changed. What is the meaning of all this? either she is a prisoner on parole, or is afraid of being importuned by me. Marcel, tell me the real truth. If the latter is the case, bring her home, I implore you, and assure her that she need feel no anxiety; tell her I swear by all that is most sacred never to see her again. Do you hear, Marcel? Answer, and relieve me from the torment of this uncertainty."

"Well, it is very much as you say," answered Marcel, after a little hesitation; "Madam d'Estrelle is a prisoner on parole; but the engagement into which she has entered is with herself, and nobody can force her to keep it. She is free to return, but she cannot see you any more."

"Cannot, or does not wish to?"

"She neither can, nor wishes to."

"Very well, Marcel. That is enough! Inform her of my determination to submit to her decision, and bring her back from her banishment. She is poorly lodged over there, and must be terribly lonely. Let her return to her friends, her comforts, her liberty. Go at once, won't you? Hasten! Don't allow her to suffer a single moment longer upon my account!"

"Very well, I will go," said Marcel; "I'm going; but about yourself?"

"Don't think of me," cried Julien; "what! haven't you gone yet?"

He cordially embraced Marcel, but, at the same time, fairly put him out of the door by the shoulders.

As soon as he was out of sight, Julien went to his mother.

"Well, mother," he said, with a cheerful countenance, "things look better than I had hoped. Madam d'Estrelle is not a captive, and she is soon coming home."

As he said this, he watched his mother. She uttered an exclamation of joy, but at the same time a shadow passed over her face. Julien sat down by her side, and took both her hands.

"Tell me the truth," said he; "the idea of this marriage troubles you a little?"

"How can I help earnestly desiring an event that would make you happy? I was only a little startled, because I thought you no longer hoped."

"I have been very resigned, as you advised. You told me not to be discouraged, but to wait, and not to think too much about her; you warned me that she would perhaps forget me, and that I ought then to forget her."

"And you promised me that you would forget, if necessary. But now I see that you are thinking of her more than ever."

"And don't you think I have reasons for rejoicing? Tell me frankly if I am deceiving myself; you ought to prevent me from doing so."

"Ah, my child, what shall I tell you? She is an adorable being! I am like you, — I love her; but will she be happy with us?"

"You know that M. Antoine is doing almost as well by her as by you; that he has placed her above want. You were afraid we would suffer on account of our poverty, but that need no longer be feared. Now, what is it that troubles you?"

"Nothing, if she loves you!"

"You sigh as you say that. Do you doubt it?"

"I have doubted it thus far, nor can you blame me! If I do her an injustice, it is your fault and hers. You did not take me into your confidence, allow me to watch the growth of your love, to follow its phases; and when you told me one morning, 'We love each other to distraction,' I must say I thought your passion too sudden to be very serious. It seemed to me that you hardly knew each other! When I confessed my love to your father, he had been three years at work decorating our house, and I had seen him every day. I had had many good offers, and was perfectly sure that I loved nobody but him. Julie's position in regard to you is very different. She has lived secluded, and has not yet received proposals from persons of good position, whom she might have loved. She was longing for affection, and was suffering terribly from ennui, without acknowledging it. She saw you, and esteemed you, as you deserve. You pleased her, naturally. Peculiar circumstances have thrown you together, and she imagined that she loved you passionately. Did she deceive herself? The future will show; but she disappeared at the very moment when she had promised to avow her engagement, and has let you suffer and wait without sending you one word of consolation. If I have doubted her, you must admit that appearances are against her."

"You think, then, that her prejudices are stronger than her love? You think she was not speaking the truth when she told me with what enthusiasm she would embrace a humble position in life, and how little she cared for rank and titles?"

"I do not say that, I say that she may have deceived herself about the strength of her attachment for you, and the reality of her disgust for the world."

"And you would not be much surprised if you should be told that you had judged correctly?"

"Not much."

"Nor much distressed?"

"That would depend upon you; I should be afflicted in proportion to the bitterness of your regrets. If you

bore the blow bravely, I should say that it was the best thing that could have happened; and that you will some day secure the love of a wiser and stronger woman."

"Poor Julie!" thought Julien to himself, "even my own mother regards her love for me as a mistake and weakness."

"Well, mother," he continued aloud, "take comfort! She has renounced the dream we indulged in together; she no longer believes in it, and is only afraid I will seek to recall it to her mind. All that you foresaw has happened. Marcel has just been telling me about it, and I have given him my word that I would never see her again."

"Ah, *mon Dieu!*" cried Madam Thierry, startled and alarmed; "how can you tell me such a thing so quietly? Can you really be so indifferent to her as that?"

"You see for yourself. I was very much disturbed the first few days, nor did I hide this from you; but, as time passed on, I have understood perfectly the silence of Madam d'Estrelle. My tranquillity now is the result of two months reflection. You need not be astonished, therefore, and I hope you will believe that I have enough pride and good sense to recover from any sorrow that I may have felt."

Julien's firmness was not assumed, he spoke in perfect good faith. But he did not confess the whole truth. He was suffering too much to make even a half-way avowal of his misery safe. It was absolutely necessary for him to keep it entirely to himself.

In the evening it was very warm, and he went out to take a swim in the river. He usually joined, for this amusement, a few young artists engaged in the porcelain manufactory, whom he was in the habit of assisting with advice and instruction. But to-day, wishing to be alone, he avoided them, and selected a solitary spot on the margin of a shady meadow. The weather was dull and gloomy. He threw himself mechanically into the water, and all of a sudden the thought came into his head, as he was swimming along, —

"I do not feel as if I could ever recover from this atro-

cious pain. If I should stop striking out for a few instants, this water would swallow up my sorrow, and keep the secret of my discouragement."

As these thoughts passed through his mind, he stopped swimming, and sank quickly. But he remembered his mother's despair, and, as he touched bottom, sent himself to the top again with one spring. He was a fine swimmer, and perhaps ran no risk in this trifling with death; but the temptation was powerful, and there is a terrible fascination in the idea of suicide. Three times he yielded, with more and more longing, and saved himself with less and less resolution. A fourth time the bewildering frenzy seized him, and with more violence than ever. He threw himself upon the shore, frightened at himself, and, lying upon the sand, cried, —

"My poor mother, pardon me!"

Then he wept bitterly; for the first time since his father's death.

His tears afforded him no relief. The weeping of a strong man is a frightful agony; stifled cries, terrible suffocations convulsed his frame. He blushed at his own weakness, and at being obliged to confess that he could not rally from it, and might, perhaps, never do so. He returned home, discontented with himself, and almost cursing the days of happiness that he had enjoyed. Then he began to be angry; and, while his mother was asleep, he lingered alone in the garden, watching the lightning that played along the horizon, and reproaching his mother for loving him too much, and depriving him of the liberty of disposing of himself.

"It is slavery," he cried, "to be always living for somebody besides yourself. I have not even the right to die. Why should I have a mother? Those are most fortunate who have no ties. If they still desire to preserve a life that is ruined, they can plunge into bewildering dissipation, into intoxicating debaucheries, and so find forgetfulness. For my part, I have not even that right. I cannot even have the consolation of being melancholy and ill. I am to die by a slow fire, and with a smile; — to shed a tear is a crime! I cannot breathe hard,

I cannot have a dream, or speak in my sleep, but my mother is up, ill herself with alarm. Nor can I make any change in my way of living; I cannot travel, try to find forgetfulness or distraction in motion and fatigue; anything of that kind would make her unhappy. To live without me would kill her. I must be either a hero or saint, in order to keep my mother alive! Happy are orphans and abandoned children! They are not condemned to carry a burden too great for their strength."

As soon as he had given way to this rebellion against fate, other blasphemies rushed into his mind. Why had Julie come to interrupt his dream of devotedness and virtue? He had accepted all the obligations of his position, and had fulfilled them thoroughly. What right had she to take possession of his life, because weary of her own solitude? Was it not wicked and cowardly in her to have revealed to him the joys of heaven, — to him who had neither hoped for nor asked her love, — only to leave him afterwards to the humiliation of having believed in her?

"You have made me a wretch!" he cried, rage and grief contending within him; "you have robbed me of my self-respect, of all love of my art; you have made me curse the love of my own mother, distrust my strength, abandon myself to the stupid and shameful notion of suicide! It would serve you right if I should revenge myself, — seek you out amid your friends, and reproach you with the loss of my faith, my peace, my dignity. I will do it, — yes! You, also, shall be crushed by my misery."

The idea of Julie's future life, such as it would probably be, occurred to him, and his heart was tortured by all the pangs of jealousy. He saw her in the arms of another, and thought of a hundred ways of murdering his rival.

Going off into the fields, he wandered about at random, until he found himself once more at the edge of the water. The storm had become violent, and a tree, not far off, was struck by lightning. He rushed up to it, hoping that the same bolt would strike him. The rain

fell in torrents, but he scarcely felt it; it was almost daylight when he returned, ashamed lest any one should see him in such a demented condition. He slept two hours, and awoke exhausted, frightened at what had taken place within him, and determined not to let himself be carried away again by the violence of a passion, whose extreme danger he had not before understood. It was with a good deal of difficulty that he got up and took breakfast with his mother.

"Since love is the supreme good of life," he said to her, "I had always believed that it must elevate and sanctify. I see, however, that it is nothing but an exaggerated selfishness, and that it makes us either madmen or fools. Love must be conquered, but it cannot be broken off like a material chain; it must be gradually extinguished."

Julien had a violent attack of fever, and was delirious. In his frenzy he revealed all his agony to his mother, and she also, in her heart, cursed poor Julie.

Marcel, in the meanwhile, had gone to see Julie.

"Madam," said he, "you ought now to go back to your house."

"Never, my friend," she replied, with her melancholy sweetness. "I am very well off here; living on my little income, and with all I want, why should I be discontented? Unless you object to having me remain in your house —"

"The house is not mine. I deceived you as to that; but you can remain in it, unless you will do what I ask you, out of regard for Julien."

"For Julien? — How so?"

"Julien knows where you are. He knows that it is your wish not to see him again, and he has given his oath that he will not attempt to disobey you. He submits entirely to a decision, whose motives he does not know. You have, therefore, no reason for concealing yourself any longer."

"Ah! very well," said Julie, in a bewildered sort of way; — "but where shall I go?"

"To Paris; to your own home."

"I have no home."

"That is possible; but you are supposed to be temporarily in possession of your hotel. You are supposed to be arranging a settlement with M. Antoine. It is best that you should be seen; if you prolong your mysterious absence too much, it will give rise to suspicions and calumnies."

"What would people say?"

"Whatever can be said of a woman who is supposed to have something to hide."

"What difference does it make to me?"

"For Julien's sake, you should guard your reputation. So far we have succeeded in preventing any insinuations from being made against you."

"Julien knows very well that I have nothing with which to reproach myself."

"It is for that very reason that he will cut the throat of the first man who says a word to your disadvantage."

"Let us go, then," said Julie, ringing for Camille. "I will do whatever you wish, my friend, provided I never need see M. Antoine again."

"Do not say that, madam; I had one single hope left."

"Ah, you have one single hope left, have you?" said Julie, with her wistful smile.

"It would not be the truth to call it a very well-founded one," answered Marcel, sadly; "but I must not abandon it, except at the last extremity. Do not deprive me of the means of subduing the obstinacy of M. Antoine."

"To what purpose?" answered Julie. "Did you not explain to me that it is a misfortune for a plebeian to marry a woman of rank; that in such a case his life becomes a torment, a martyrdom, a frightful struggle?"

"Ah, madam, but if the plebeian is very wealthy, most people would pardon you."

"And so I must ask your uncle to enrich the man I love? I must dishonor myself in my own eyes, and perhaps in Julien's, in order to obtain the pardon of a cruel and heartless world. You ask too much of me, Marcel; you are taking advantage of my weakness and submis-

siveness. May God give me strength for one thing, — to resist you in this; for, after such a shame, I should feel that I had lived too long."

Poor Marcel was overwhelmed with fatigue and vexation. He had exhausted himself in running about, in arguing, in efforts of all kinds, and all he had accomplished was to rescue his friends from poverty, and place them in a condition of material comfort. As far as regards their spiritual state he could do nothing; and he said to his wife that evening, —

"My good friend, nothing is falser than the real. I have been trying to secure them the means of living, and have only succeeded in killing them."

VIII.

JULIE returned to Paris and to her former luxury; she found her equipages, her jewels and servants awaiting her. M. Antoine had been a faithful guardian, and the hotel d'Estrelle was unchanged. She paid no attention to anything. Marcel had vainly hoped that she would at least feel some sort of instinctive happiness on being surrounded once more by these familiar scenes. He was alarmed, and almost vexed at her immovable indifference. He had sent word of her return to such of her friends as he could communicate with, and imagined that she would feel obliged to arouse herself in their presence. She met them, however, without emotion; and when they expressed alarm at her paleness and evident exhaustion, she attributed her changed appearance to a cold which she had taken on the journey, and which had detained her in the country longer than she expected. It was nothing, she said; she had been worse, and was now improving; and had preferred not to write, in order not to alarm anybody. She promised to see her physician, and get well.

The Baroness d'Ancourt called a few days after her arrival.

"I have treated you badly," she said. "I am sorry, my dear Julie, and I have come to ask your pardon."

"I have no ill feelings towards you," replied Madam d'Estrelle.

"Oh, of course not. I know you are a great philosopher, or else a great saint. But you are a woman, too, my friend. You have been persecuted, and you suffer."

"I do not understand you."

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* You have been tormented by your creditors so long, that you have become quite accustomed, I know, to being persecuted by them. But it seems there came a crisis when you were in danger of losing everything. It is said that you have secured a further delay, although with a great deal of difficulty, and with the certainty that they are only drawing back to make a surer spring. You told Madam des Morges so, did you not?"

"Yes, it is true. I am only staying here while a final adjustment is being made."

"But you will be able to save something for yourself?"

"I do not wish to retain any of M. d'Estrelle's property. I ought to surrender it, and I prefer to."

"No wonder, then, that you are so pale and changed. I was told that you were wonderfully resigned, and it is perfectly true; but you are ill with sorrow. You do wrong, my dear friend, to reject the consolations of friendship. You are playing a very grand part, but it will kill you! If I were in your place, I would make a great lamentation and outcry. It would not help me at all, I suppose, but it would be a comfort. And then I should be talked about, society would feel an interest in me, and it is always a consolation to attract attention. You, on the contrary, are allowing yourself to be buried alive without saying a single word; and the world, which is selfish, will forget that there is any such person in existence. Only yesterday evening, they were talking about you at the Duchess de B—'s. 'That poor Madam d'Estrelle,' said some one, 'she is quite ruined; have you heard about it? She won't have the means of hiring a fiacre to make calls.'

"'What?' said the Marquis de S—, 'must we see such a pretty woman as that going about on foot? Impossible! Shocking! Is she very unhappy?' — 'Not at all,' answered Madam des Morges; 'she says she will do perfectly well. She is an astonishing person!' And then they changed the subject. The moment you show that you have courage, nobody has any more compassion for you, and all the more since it is easiest to be thinking only about one's self."

Julie only smiled.

"It frightens me to see you smile in that way!" continued the baroness. "Do you know, my dear, I think you are very ill. What is the use in being so reserved? If you are so very sensitive, you will grow careless about yourself, and die, or languish along, and lose your beauty, which is worse than dying. Take care of yourself, Julie, and do not give way as you are doing. We are not as much deceived as you think, by your wonderful courage. We all know perfectly well that it is impossible to lose a fortune, without regret. Do you know, — I must repeat it, even if it does vex you, — I think you made a great mistake in not marrying that rich old man; and perhaps it is not too late to revoke your decision. Nobody would blame you now; when a woman is utterly ruined — "

"Are you commissioned to make me another offer upon his part?" said Julie, with a little bitterness.

"No, I have not seen him since the day we quarrelled upon his account. He has called several times, but I gave orders that he was not to be admitted. Don't, at any rate, feel disgusted with the idea because I have referred to it. If he should return to you, don't refuse him; and if he marries you, be sure that I will receive him for your sake."

"You are too kind!" said Julie.

"You insist on being stiff and proud with me, do you? And yet I am your friend, and have proved it. I fought a battle in your defence a little while ago. One of the Marchioness d'Estrelle's friends, some cowardly fellow, ventured to utter an insinuation against you in connection with an insignificant painter, son of the famous Thierry,

— you know who I mean, — the artist who lived at the end of your garden. I said that a woman like you would never degrade herself out of pure frivolity, and ordered him to be silent. I was promptly seconded by the abbé de Nivières, who stated that the young man did not even know you; that he had gone to live at Sèvres with his mother; that he was a capital fellow, and that he declared expressly that he had never seen Madam d'Estrelle the whole time he had lived near her, and that this was the truth. By the way, you used to take an interest in those people, did you not — in the mother, at least? Do you still see them?"

"She has no need of my services any longer, so that I have no reason for seeing them."

"It is only your health, then, about which I feel very much concerned, that is troubling you? Stay, I am going to spend a month in Chantilly; suppose you accompany me. We shall see a great deal of company, and it will do you good. If you regain your pretty color, perhaps we will find a husband for you."

The baroness at last took leave. Chattering, offering her services, and lamenting over her friend to the very step of her carriage, she made a great outcry against the selfishness of the world, and all the while did not care the least in the world for anybody except herself.

"Julie is a great deal too proud and suspicious," she thought; "I declare I won't call there again in a hurry. She is vexatious enough. If she wants anything of me, she knows where I am to be found."

It was pretty much the same with all Madame d'Estrelle's acquaintances. She had never realized, before, the neglect into which those fall who abandon themselves; and she ceased all the more to care for herself, because her heart was withered by this indifference.

After passing several days in this way, without seeming to consider about taking any measures of any kind, she waked up, as it were, one morning, and said to Marœl, —

"I have done as you wished. I have shown myself to my friends, explained my absence, and informed them

that I was soon going away again. It is time to wind up my affairs definitely, and resign my house to M. Antoine. My purpose is to live in one of the provinces, — in some solitary place where no one knows me. Camille will accompany me, and I shall take no one else. Will you be so good as to direct me in selecting some lonely neighborhood and exceedingly humble abode?"

"There is one great difficulty in the way," said Marcel; "M. Antoine will not allow any liquidation to be made. His release in full is in my portfolio, and he has no idea, so far, but that it has been accepted."

"And you received that release from him!" cried Julie, indignantly; "he believes that I have accepted it! You were not courageous enough to tear it up, and throw it in his face! Ah, I beg your pardon, Marcel! I forgot that he is your kinsman, and that you must necessarily treat him with respect. Very well; give me the document, and bring M. Antoine here. The transaction must be closed to-day, and I will attend to it myself."

"Be careful, madam," said Marcel, encouraged by the gleam of energy that Madam d'Estrelle displayed when this one vulnerable point was touched; "M. Antoine is himself extremely irritable, and it gratifies his vanity to feel that you are indebted to him. Do not quarrel with him, for in that case he will revenge himself upon Julien."

"Is not Julien's fortune secured?"

"Yes, if all the conditions of the agreement are observed, but I should deceive you if I affirmed that M. Antoine is aware of your refusal to accept your part of them."

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* Marcel, into what a situation have you brought me! In your blind devotion to practical matters, your obstinate determination to save me from poverty, you have disgraced me! This man believes that I have sold my heart, — that he has bought it with his money, and Julien, — he also must suppose that I have betrayed my love for wealth! Ah, it would have been better if you had killed me! I feel to-day distinctly that I cannot endure such a life any longer, — that I must die!"

Julie, who had not wept for a long time, sobbed as if her heart would break. Marcel preferred to see her even thus, rather than changed into a statue. Hoping that the consequences of a violent crisis would be favorable, he resolutely provoked one.

"Reproach me, curse me, if you choose," he said, "but I did it for Julien's sake."

"That is true," replied Julie, "and I was wrong to find fault with you. You feel sure, then, if I should offend M. Antoine by refusing his offer, that all he has done for Julien will become a matter of uncertainty again?"

"Undoubtedly; and, what is more, he would have justice on his side. He is beginning to make me uneasy, — so impatient is he becoming to have you proclaim his merits, and cease being ashamed of accepting his kindness. You must drink the cup; it must be done, for the love of Julien, — if indeed, as I suppose, that love still exists."

"Do not say anything about that. I will drink it to the very lees. But how are we to explain to the world the generosity with which I am treated? To what motive will it be attributed? People will think I have been paying court to this old man, — that I have fascinated him by some discreditable coquetry. Perhaps they will say even worse!"

"Yes, madam," said Marcel, who wished to make one decisive experiment, in order to ascertain Julie's sentiments. "Evil speakers will say all that; and I do not see, now, how to prevent it. We will try; but, if it cannot be done, will your devotion to Julien enable you to endure even this?"

"Yes," said Madam d'Estrelle; "I will endure to the end. There is something to sign, is there not?"

And she thought to herself, —

"Afterwards, I will kill myself."

"You will not have any new engagements to make," said Marcel; "but it will be necessary for you to receive M. Antoine, and thank him. I am absolutely certain that he will make Julien's fortune, if you will consent to some sort of reconciliation."

"Go and bring M. Antoine," said Julie. "I will kill myself to-night," she said to herself, when Marcel had gone.

Despair had so intensified Julie's love, that she was no longer capable of reasoning calmly. She had accepted the fate of a martyr, and a martyr's enthusiasm was the only feeling that still bound her to life.

She wrote to Julien:

"Here is the key of the pavilion. Come at midnight; you will find me there. I am going a long journey, and want to bid you an eternal farewell."

This letter, with the key enclosed in it, she sealed, and gave to the most trustworthy of her servants; ordering him to take a horse, to ride as fast as possible to Sèvres, and bring her an answer. It was now five o'clock in the afternoon.

While waiting for M. Antoine, she went out into the garden, and paused by the edge of the little lake. It was not deep, but, if she chose to lie down in it, would answer her purpose! One who really wishes to die, can always do it. The thought of suicide, which had tempted Julien so violently a few days before, filled her mind with a frightful tranquillity.

"Nobody on earth cares for me except him," she said to herself; "and, as I cannot be his, I owe no obligations to any one else. An infernal hatred seized and strangled me in the very bloom of my life, — in the very bloom of my happiness. Not satisfied with robbing me of my love and my liberty, they want to rob me of my honor as well. Marcel said so; I must be supposed to be the mistress of this odious old man. Ah! if Julien knew that, what a horror he would feel of the comfort which his mother is enjoying! And if she should suspect it herself! — They shall never know it: I will make that sure; my death shall appear to be an accident. When I am out of the way, there will be no excuse for changing the contract. Julien will be rich and honored, and nobody will ever guess at what a cost."

Then she remembered, once more, that it rested with

Julien and herself to break all these chains, and marry in spite of poverty.

"Perhaps he would be happier so," she said; "perhaps my sacrificing myself will be only a misfortune to him. But who can tell how far M. Antoine's hate would carry him! An irritable lunatic is capable of anything. He might have him assassinated. Has he not secret agents, spies, brigands, at his service?"

Bewildered, she walked about the little lake, as if impatiently waiting the hour of her death. Then, remembering that she was to see Julien again, a wild longing for life seized her, and her heart beat as if it would break. She felt no remorse, and not even a conscientious scruple at violating an engagement forced from her by the most cruel moral violence.

"One who is going to die," she said to herself, "has a right to protest, before God, against the iniquity of her tormentors."

A violent reaction, like the ebullition of a quiet lake below which a volcano has suddenly broken out, or the sudden flashing up of an expiring flame, transformed her sweet, yielding nature, and gave her, for the moment, extraordinary strength.

She saw M. Antoine approaching with Marcel, and sat down mechanically upon a stone bench, to receive them. It was there that she had sat with the old man three months before, when he had made her the strange and ridiculous proposition whose rejection had cost her so dear.

As on that day, she heard a rustling among the leaves, and saw the sparrow that Julien had tamed fluttering its wings, and seeming to hesitate whether to perch on her shoulder. The little creature had become rather wild again. When Julien moved from the pavilion, it was nowhere in sight, and he had left it, hoping that Julie, whose long absence he had not foreseen, would be pleased to find it there. Since her return, she had seen it several times, not very far off, friendly, and yet mistrustful, but had tried in vain to coax it to come nearer. This time it allowed itself to be caught, and she was holding it in her hand when M. Antoine joined her.

She smiled, and bade him good-day with a wild expression, and he addressed her without knowing what he said; for, in spite of his tyrannical disposition, he could not conquer his bashfulness at first meeting any one. After his moment of incorrigible stammering, he could find nothing better to say than this:

"Well, you still have your tame sparrow, I see?"

"It is Julien's sparrow, and I love it," replied Julie. "Do you want to kill it? Here it is."

The way in which she said this, her death-like paleness, and the sort of fierce indifference with which she held out the poor little bird, all warm with her kisses, made a great impression upon M. Antoine. He looked at Marcel, as if to ask, "Is she crazy?" and instead of twisting the sparrow's neck, as he would have readily done three months before, he pushed it away, saying, awkwardly,—

"No matter! keep it. It will not do any harm."

"You are so kind!" said Julie, in the same dry, feverish way. "You have come to receive my thanks, have you not? You are aware that I accept everything; that I am very happy; that I no longer love anything nor anybody! that you have done me a very great service, and can say to God every night, 'I have been good and great, as You are Yourself.'"

M. Antoine stood with his mouth open; too subtle to believe that Madam d'Estrelle meant what she said, and yet too coarse to understand her, he was uncertain whether she intended to thank him or to laugh at him.

"She defies me to my face," he said aside to Marcel; "you rascal, you have fooled me!"

"No, uncle," answered Marcel, aloud; "the countess thanks you. But she is very ill, as you can see. Do not require her to talk any longer."

Marcel had calculated that the alteration in Julie's appearance would make an impression upon M. Antoine,—and it did make a vivid one. He gazed at her with a strange expression, at once stupid, cruel, and timid, and said to himself, with a joy not unmingled with terror, "That is my doing."

"Madam," he said, after hesitating a moment, "I said I would be revenged on you; that I would make you ask my pardon for your offences. Are you willing to end the whole matter by confessing that you were in the wrong? That is all I require."

"What wrong have I done?" said Julie; "explain it to me, so that I may confess it."

Antoine was very much at a loss for an answer; and, as always happened with him when he could find nothing sensible to say, his anger, — which he had almost forgotten, — suddenly revived.

"Ah! You think you have done nothing to offend me!" he said; "very well, *mordi!* You must ask my pardon fairly and squarely, or I will have satisfaction out of Julien."

"Must I ask your pardon on my knees?" asked Julie, with a sort of sorrowful haughtiness in her tone.

"Well, what if I do require it?" answered the old man, dizzy with anger, and still thinking himself defied.

"So be it, — have your will!" said Madam d'Estrelle, — and she knelt before him.

This was the crowning act of her martyrdom, — the public expiation extorted from the innocent victim, as he stands with halter on neck and torch in hand, before mounting the pile. In this moment of sublime self-immolation her troubled soul suddenly became calm, — her countenance was transfigured, — she smiled the ecstatic smile of a saint, and her eyes shone with an ineffable sweetness, as if heaven had opened and was reflected there.

Antoine could not understand this sudden change, and it startled him. His anger ceased, — not because his heart was softened, but under the influence of a feeling of superstitious terror.

"Very good," he said, "I am satisfied, and I pardon Julien. Adieu!"

He turned and fled.

Marcel paused for a moment to say a few encouraging words to Julie, — which she did not hear, or did not try to understand, — and then hastened after M. Antoine.

"Now, my good uncle," he said, in a bolder and sharper tone than he had yet assumed to him, "you ought really to be satisfied; you have killed Madam d'Estrelle!"

"Killed her?" said uncle Antoine, turning short upon him. "What piece of stupidity is that?"

"The stupidity would be in thinking her joy and gratitude sincere. You cannot be such a fool. That woman is desperate; she is dying of sorrow."

"You lie! you are all wrong, I tell you. She is still angry, and the annoyances I have caused her to suffer of late have made her ill with vexation. But she is satisfied, at last, that it was all for the best; she pulls at the bit, but she knows I am saving her in spite of herself."

"You are saving her from the chances of the future, — that is perfectly true; and you are taking the surest way to do it, — by depriving her of life."

"Pshaw! That's another subterfuge! She caught cold spending the nights in the garden with her lover; and she found it extremely tiresome in the convent of Chaillot, and still more so in that old barrack at Nanterre, where she was absolutely alone. You see she sought in vain to conceal herself, — I know every place she has been in. I have not once lost track of her. You can't cheat me! I saw the convent physician; he told me that she was inclined to melancholy by her temperament, and had no serious ailment. I saw her doctor in Paris, and he said he could not understand anything about her illness. The devil! if it had been anything serious he would have known what it was well enough. For my part, I know what it is: she has had a disappointment. That doesn't kill people, and I guarantee that she is going to get well."

"And I guarantee," said Marcel, "that if she is left to the despair into which you have plunged her for another week, she will be lost beyond recovery."

"Pho! Then she is very much in love with the dauber? And is he thinking about her too?"

"Julien is as ill as she, and in a condition of mind quite

as alarming. I took pains to satisfy myself upon this point, and succeeded in doing so with a great deal of difficulty, for he is not a man to complain. As for her, I have not been able to make her speak a single word for two months. To-day, I undertook to push her to the last extremity; — I succeeded, and from this day I have made up my mind as to my own course."

"Your course? What do you mean? What are you going to do?"

"To destroy a couple of papers that I have in my pocket, — the release with which you intrusted me for Madam d'Estrelle, and her promise never to see Julien again, — which I have never delivered to you. You both of you put yourselves into my hands when you authorized me to exchange these reciprocal obligations. I shall place you on an equal footing by destroying them both. Then the whole affair must be begun over again, and, as I am aware of the intentions of both parties, I declare to you that Madam d'Estrelle will accept nothing from you, and that you may take possession of all her property at once Up to this time, she has followed my advice implicitly; and, as I don't wish to see her die, I shall advise her to retract all that she has thus far agreed to."

"Why, you abominable scoundrel!" cried M. Antoine, stopping short in the middle of the street, and speaking in a loud voice. "I don't know why I don't break my stick over your shoulder!"

"A scoundrel, when I return you all your money, and reserve to my client only the right of living in poverty? If that is so, go and bring a suit against me, carry the affair into court, and cover yourself with ridicule and disgrace!"

"But, Julien! I have made Julien rich, you rascal. I suspected as much all along! You have extorted from me —"

"Nothing at all! Julien has been seriously ill for several days, and is so still. I hinted to his mother the true state of the case, and she answered, 'Give all the property back to M. Antoine, and let Julie be restored to us.' You see, therefore, that you do not lose one penny.

You will recover principal and interest, and we shall be at liberty to live as we choose, without being bound by any stipulation, legal or private."

"Why, you miserable wretch, you are completely backing out! I thought you were a reasonable man. You took my view of the matter entirely; you disapproved of the marriage, and were helping me establish them comfortably."

"Yes, until I saw that this comfort was going to carry them straight into their graves."

"They are a parcel of fools."

"Yes, uncle, they are: love is nothing but foolishness; but when it is incurable, we must yield to it; for my part, I yield."

"Very well," replied M. Antoine, pounding his three-cornered hat down over his eyes with a desperate blow of the fist. "Go and order that lady to clear out of her house, — that is, out of my house, — this instant. I shall go to Sèvres, and turn the others out myself. If every one of them is not in the street within two hours, I'll send sheriffs' officers, policemen — I'll set the buildings on fire — I'll — "

By this time he was running so fast that his foolish threats could no longer be heard. Leaving Marcel in the street, he rushed into his house, a capital caricature, although he did not know it, of Orestes pursued by the furies. Marcel followed quietly, without allowing himself to be alarmed, and forced his way in, although orders had been already given that the master was not at home. He had resolved to fight his way in, had it been necessary.

"You are going to Sèvres, are you?" he began; "I'll go with you."

"As you please," said uncle Antoine, gloomily. "Have you notified Madam Julie to vacate *my* hotel?"

"Yes, I have," said Marcel, who saw that the old man was completely beside himself, and had no idea how short a time had elapsed since their altercation in the street.

"Is she packing up? Will she carry off — ?"

"Nothing," said Marcel; "she leaves everything. Are we going to Sèvres? Have you ordered a coach?"

"My covered wagon and work-horse will go faster. They are harnessing."

He sat down on the corner of a table, and remained plunged in his own reflections. Marcel, who had determined not to lose sight of him, sat down opposite; he feared for his reason, and was also apprehensive that his rage would suggest some diabolical trick to him by which his friends would be victimized. When they started, it was seven o'clock in the evening. Marcel was the first to break the silence.

"What are we going to do at Sèvres?" he said.

"You will see," answered M. Antoine.

After quarter of an hour, Marcel spoke again:

"It will do no good for you to go there. The papers are at my office. All that is necessary is to destroy them, and I give you notice that I will not permit you to make an absurd scene with my aunt. She is in trouble, and Julien is very ill, as I told you."

"And you lied like a dog!" replied M. Antoine; "see there!"

He pointed to a hired cabriolet that was just passing them. In it sat Julien, pale and haggard, darkly frowning, and with an abstracted but determined expression. He had received Julie's note, had forced himself to rise, and, desiring to question Marcel before keeping his appointment, was on his way to Paris in good season.

"If it is with him that you wish to speak," said Marcel, "let us turn back. I wager anything that he is going to my house."

"I don't want to speak to him," answered M. Antoine ironically, "since he is dying."

"Did you think he looked well?" asked Marcel.

M. Antoine relapsed into his sinister silence, and they drove on in the direction of Sèvres. Did he really know what he meant to do there? To confess the truth, he had not the least idea. His mind was in a terribly confused state, and he was thinking about this fact,

and this alone, for he really began to be alarmed about himself.

"After all," he thought, "I shall be the sickest of the three, if I don't take care. Anger is a good thing, it keeps a man alive, and strengthens him in his old age; an old man who allows others to manage him is done for. Still, one must not indulge in too much at a time; I must be more quiet."

And upon this, with a power of will that would have made him a remarkable man, if he had possessed better tendencies, or had been better directed in life, he resolved to take a nap, and actually slept quietly until the wagon began to rumble over the pavements of Sèvres.

Marcel had been tempted to try and turn back without his uncle's knowing it, but it was a question whether M. Antoine's servant would obey him; and, in any event, since Julien was out of the way, was it not the best plan to wait and see what M. Antoine would have to say to Madam Thierry? He was a good deal afraid of her. Would he dare tell her to her face that he took back all he had given?

Sleep restored M. Antoine to himself, — that is, to his chronic condition of deliberate aversions, jealous self-love, and brooding resentment. They found Madam Thierry standing before a beautiful portrait of her husband, as if she had hoped, by gazing upon the serene and cheerful countenance, to inspire herself with the confidence in the future that had always characterized that charming man. Marcel had but just time to step in first, and warn her briefly:

"M. Antoine is close at my heels," he said. "He is furious; but, with patience and firmness, you may still be able to save everything."

"*Mon Dieu!* What shall I say?"

"Tell him that you resign all his gifts, but that you are grateful to him for them. Julie adores Julien. Everything depends on my uncle, — he is coming."

"Shall you leave me alone with him?"

"Yes, he insists upon it: but I will stay close by, and be ready to interpose, if necessary."

He stepped quickly into a little cabinet, and, leaving the door ajar, sat down and listened. M. Antoine came into the drawing-room by the other door. He was less timid now that he no longer felt Marcel's scrutinizing eye fastened upon him.

"Your servant, Madam André," he said, as he came in; "are you alone?"

Madam Thierry rose, answered that she was, and politely invited him to sit down.

Her face also was greatly altered. She had been watching with her son for several nights; and now that he had risen and departed in spite of her remonstrances, she felt that the great crisis of his life drama was come.

"Is your son ill?" asked M. Antoine.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Seriously?"

"God grant that he will recover."

"Is he in bed?"

"He has just got up."

"Could I see him?"

"He has gone out, monsieur."

"Then he is not so very ill?"

"He was extremely so until last night; since then he has been a little better."

"What was the matter?"

"Fever and delirium."

"A sunstroke?"

"No, monsieur."

"Trouble, perhaps?"

"Yes, monsieur; great trouble."

"Because he is in love?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"But it is a silly business, to be in love, when he might be rich."

"That cannot be reasoned about, monsieur."

"Do you know that I came to make you a proposition?"

"No, I did not."

"If you will send your son to America, I will furnish him with a handsome capital, I will direct his operations,

and in ten years he will come home with an income of thirty thousand francs."

"On what conditions, monsieur?"

"That he bids farewell to a certain lady of our acquaintance; nothing more than that."

"And if he refuses?"

"If he refuses, — and that is what I expect, for I have been advised that it is likely, — in that event an agreement entered into between a certain lady and myself respecting him becomes null and void."

"Very good, monsieur; I understand. You have the right to do what you choose with your own, and we submit."

"But you might resist, if you chose. You were not consulted about accepting my gifts; you did not know of the conditions agreed upon by Madam d'Estrelle and myself. There is sufficient ground for a lawsuit, and I shall be very likely to lose it, if my opponents act in bad faith."

"If by your opponents you mean my son and myself, make yourself perfectly easy, monsieur. We surrender your benefactions without any hesitation whatever."

"Ah, yes, my benefactions! They are burdensome to you; you are ashamed of them."

"As long as we did not know that they restrained the liberty of one who is dear to us, we were not ashamed of them; and even, — you may be assured," continued Madam Thierry, making a great effort for her son's sake, "we were grateful to you; — if we had been certain that we owed this generosity to your solicitude for our welfare, we should have blessed your name. But whatever caused your kindness, and however short its duration, it has made us happy, notwithstanding our troubles and anxieties, to see this house again, and to find ourselves in the midst of our dearest recollections. You order us to leave it, and we shall obey; but I want to thank you for myself — "

"You, madam!" said Antoine, looking steadily at her.

"Yes, — to thank you for the two months that you have allowed us to stay here. The thought of never re-

turning to my home was always distressing to me: henceforth it will be less so; I shall remember this short visit as a last beautiful dream casting a gleam of sunshine over my life, and which I owe to you."

Madam Thierry had an agreeable voice and a peculiarly refined accent, which were extremely attractive. In his fits of anger, M. Antoine was in the habit of calling her "The fine-spoken lady." He felt, nevertheless, the influence of this sweet voice, still fresh and pure, caressing his ear with kind and almost reverential words. He did not understand the delicacy of her sentiments, but he saw that she seemed humble and submissive; and this it was that he so eagerly craved.

"Come, Madam André," he said, in the gruff manner which he was accustomed to assume when his anger began to be dissipated, "you know how to say exactly what you want, but confess that in your heart you can't abide me!"

"I hate nobody, monsieur; but you oblige me to confess that I am afraid of you!"

Nothing could have been shrewder than this answer. To inspire fear was, according to M. Antoine, the highest attribute of power. Wonderfully softened, he said, in a tone that was almost good-natured, —

"And what the devil makes you so afraid of me?"

Madam André possessed the penetration peculiar to women who have lived much in society, and the tact of a mother arguing the cause of her child. Seeing how important an advantage she had gained, she proceeded to forget, — very opportunely, under the circumstances, — that she was sixty years old, and courageously decided to be a little coquettish, although M. Antoine was a man with whom it was dangerous to be too condescending.

"Brother," said she, "it was your fault if you did not retain my confidence. I do not reproach you with having betrayed it, for your intentions were good, and it was I who did not understand them. I was very young, and my unhappy position made me peculiarly sensitive. Utterly inexperienced, I thought you were trying to persuade me to abandon André, when —"

"When, in reality, I was telling you in good faith to save him."

"Yes, you were acting out of affection for him. I was blind, obstinate, — whatever you choose; but you must confess that it was your place to overlook my folly. You ought to have treated me like the child that I was, and to have become my brother again, as before."

"You want me to confess all that, do you? But you always treated me haughtily afterwards — "

"Why didn't you laugh at my haughtiness? Why didn't you take me by the hand, and say, 'Sister, you are a little goose. Embrace me, and let bygones be bygones.' That's what you ought to have done."

"What! You think I ought — "

"The most reasonable is under an obligation to be the most generous."

"And would you like matters arranged on that footing now?"

"It is never too late to understand each other, and to bring back kind feelings that should never have been cast aside."

"Well, then, are you sorry now to think that you wounded me?"

"I am sorry, and I ask your pardon. Will you grant it?"

"Ah, *diantre!* That is a different thing, my dear lady! You are in want of me now; — you want my help!"

"Yes, M. Antoine, I do. My son is crazy with grief. Marry him to the woman he loves."

"Ah, there you are again!" cried M. Antoine, flashing out in another burst of rage.

"It is where we began," answered Madam Thierry; "I have asked but one thing of you since you came here, — freedom of action for Madam d'Estrelle."

"Yes, and plenty of money besides, for everybody."

"No, no money; nothing at all! I told you we were ready to resign your property. If you will allow us to rent this house of you, we will live here, and pay you the rent, with pleasure. If you refuse, we must submit to

your will. But let us depart without anger, and forgive us for being happy; for, if our hearts are only satisfied with each other, and if we can only feel that our happiness does not annoy you, we shall be so in spite of our trials and privations."

M. Antoine was conquered. Ashamed, he caught at a last twig of argument:

"How proud you are!" he said; "it is always the same thing, and you are all alike! You have a contempt for the rich man's money! You despise it! 'Take it back again,' you say; 'we don't want any of it; we have no need of it; we can live on the air! What is money, after all? Mere pebbles, to an intelligent mind!' And yet, my dear madam, money honestly earned by a man who began life with nothing but his wits, ought to be of some account! It is the honey of a working bee; it is a tropical flower, made to bloom in an artificial climate by the patience and skill of the master gardener. And you think it is worth nothing? With all his genius, my poor brother knew no better than to spend what he worked like a drudge to obtain. I have a better way of using my money: I keep it; I increase it every day, and I make people happy with it when I choose."

"But what are you coming at, M. Antoine?" asked Madam Thierry, to whom Marcel, through the door behind the horticulturist, was making signs which she did not understand.

"This is what I am coming at: that you are not so good a mother as you imagine. You are very willing to sacrifice everything else for your son, except your contempt for the money I have given you. I believe you think I stole my fortune; I believe you think my money has a bad smell."

"But for heaven's sake why do you say that? What makes you suppose that I esteem you less than you deserve?"

"Because if you really were a good mother, instead of talking such nonsense as that, you would say, 'Brother, we are unfortunate, and you are rich; you can save us. We are a little foolish for wishing to pay court to Madam

d'Estrelle, but that is no reason why you should leave us without bread. Pardon us altogether, and once for all! Let us have the privilege of loving and of eating too; if your goodness humiliates us, so much the worse for us. We know that you are a great man, — a magnificent man; you will take pity on us, and grant all that we ask!' There, Madam André, that is what you would say, — that is what you would beg on your knees, if necessary, if you were really a good mother, instead of being a lady of rank."

Madam Thierry was mute with astonishment. She looked at Marcel, who, without being seen by M. Antoine, was energetically telegraphing to her, by gesture and pantomime, to yield to the old capitalist's fancy. The poor lady felt a most painful reluctance, yet she did not hesitate; she glided down from her chair to her footstool, and kneeling there, took both of M. Antoine's hands.

"You are right, brother," she said, "I ought to do as you say. I yield. Be the noblest of men; pardon all; give us all!"

"You have done it at last, then! And just in time!" cried M. Antoine, raising her; "and when people are reconciled they embrace, don't they?"

Madam Thierry embraced M. Antoine, and Marcel entered just in season to applaud.

"There, now, Mr. Pettifogger," said the amateur gardener, "a pretty figure you cut! A fine plan of opposition you had! You were going to break and smash up everything, to fling your client and your family into poverty, and all for the sake of not surrendering to a rich man, — a powerful man, — the natural enemy of poor people, and of those who don't know how to make money! A fine lawyer you are, upon my word! a lawyer who can secure your clients nothing but love and dry bread! Luckily, the women have more sense. Here are two of them who have been wishing me at the devil, and both of them have gone down on their knees to me this very evening! Well, sister, this closes the whole matter. I will never recall it to your mind, for I am a generous man; and. when people satisfy me, I know how to reward them.

Your son shall marry the pretty countess. I must turn her out of her house to keep people from talking, but I will give Julien the hotel d'Estrelle, and an income of twenty-five thousand francs, as a marriage portion. That's the way I do things! I know very well that you have been acting to-day out of policy, — I haven't been fooled as to that, — and that you will thank me to-morrow, once for all, and forget everything. But no matter; you have done as I wished, — you have submitted, and I ask no more."

"We will give you a great deal more," replied Madam Thierry, "for you will not be able to refuse the affection of warm and sincere hearts. You will experience a happiness that you ought to have known before, but we will try and make up for lost time."

"Oh, that's all talk," said M. Antoine; "happiness is in being your own master, and I don't want any one's help to make me that. I don't like brats and sentimentality. I never was meant for the father of a family; but, if I had been born a king, I should have governed my people excellently. To command has always been a favorite idea of mine; and I reign over the kingdom I have, a great deal better than plenty of monarchs, who don't know what they are about."

In spite of her anxiety as to what might be the reason of Julien's absence, and her desire to send Marcel to find him, Madam Thierry felt obliged to invite M. Antoine to supper.

"Oh!" he said, "for my part, my supper consists of a crust of hard bread and a glass of cheap wine. That is my way; I never cared much for eating."

What he wanted was set before him, and when he had supped, Marcel hastened his departure.

"I am sure," he said to his aunt, "that Julien is waiting for me at my house. He is probably impatient because I do not return; but my wife will try and make him comfortable, Julio will amuse him, and if he should feel worse, you can depend upon it he will be well cared for."

Julien was, in fact, excessively impatient, notwithstand-

ing all Madam Marcel's care and attention. Feeling very weak when he reached the house, he had attempted to eat a little, and to entertain himself with the prattle of his little godson; but when he heard the clock strike eleven, and saw that Marcel did not return, he could no longer endure his mortal suspense. Saying that his mother would be uneasy if he did not return by midnight, and promising to take a carriage to Sèvres, he departed. In fact, he proceeded on foot, and by a roundabout way, to the rue de Babylone; he thought it necessary to take every precaution in order to guard against being seen and followed, as before, by some of M. Antoine's agents. He arrived, however, safely, and without attracting any observation. M. Antoine had maintained his espionage upon Julie long enough to be quite certain that she and Julien never met, and then had given it up.

As it struck twelve, Julien entered the pavilion and found Julie there; he had been waiting outside the door, and she inside of it, for quarter of an hour.

At this very moment, Marcel, M. Antoine, and Madam Thierry were entering Paris on their return from Sèvres. M. Antoine's frugal supper, and his not very entertaining conversation, had exhausted the widow's patience. She was anxious about her son, and insisted upon having a seat in the wagon, so that she might join him at Marcel's house.

Julien, before meeting Julie, had armed himself with all his courage. He was expecting a painful explanation, and had sworn to himself to show no anger, to utter no reproaches, to betray no weakness; and yet, as he opened the door, his hand shook: overwhelmed by a sudden passion of fury and despair, he hesitated, and drew back; but, on seeing him, Julie uttered a wild cry of joy, threw her arms about his neck, and pressed him passionately to her heart. It was so dark that neither of them could see how changed the other was. Their burning kisses made them forget the fever raging in their veins. The fever of love, which revivifies, was victorious over that which destroys.

Julien was the first to recover from this moment of

delirium. Alarmed, rather than intoxicated by Julie's caresses, he suddenly repulsed her.

"If you still love me," he said, "how can you consent to leave me?"

"Bah!" she answered, "it is not, perhaps, for so long."

"You wrote that you wanted to bid me an eternal farewell!"

"I do not know what I wrote; I was out of my senses. But it is not possible for those who love as we do to part forever."

"It is true then that you are going away? — And will you come back?"

"Yes, — if I can. But do not talk about that. To-night is our own; give it all to love."

Amid their transports of happiness, Julien was again seized with terror. In the passionate words that escaped Julie there was a mysterious gloom, — a sinister foreboding, which seemed to freeze the blood in his veins.

"What is the matter with you?" he cried suddenly. "You are deceiving me. Either you are going away, or you think you are going to die! You are ill; I know you are; — the physicians have given you up, perhaps."

"No, I give you my word that they promise to cure me."

"Let me see your face! I cannot see you; let us go out from here. I am afraid! It seems to me, at moments, that I am dreaming, and that it is only your ghost I am holding in my arms."

He carried her into the garden, but it was almost as dark there as in the pavilion.

"*Mon Dieu!* I do not see you; I cannot see your face at all," cried Julien, devoured with anxiety. "Your arms have grown thin, — you are wasted away. You are like a shadow; it seems to me that your feet do not touch the ground. Tell me; are you a dream? Am I here, close to you, in this garden where we have been so happy? I am afraid I shall go mad!"

They approached the little lake, in which the clear moon-

less sky, with all its stars, was perfectly mirrored, and there Julien saw that Madam d'Estrelle was pale; the glimmering radiance of the water reflected upon her face, made her seem even more wan than she really was. Her great, hollow eyes, shining in the night with a glassy brightness, showed him how thin she had become.

"You are dying!" he cried; "I am sure of it! That is what made you send for me. Very well, Julie; I will never leave you again. If I must lose you, I will receive your last sigh, and I will die too."

"Oh no, Julien, you cannot! — Your mother!"

"She shall die with us then; will that satisfy you? She wanted to die when she lost my father; she said so, in spite of herself, in her first outbreak of sorrow, and I know very well that she has continued to live only for my sake. Since we three have only one soul, we will depart together, and we will go to a world where the purest love will not be considered a crime. There must be such a world for those who cannot understand the unjust prejudices of this. Let us die, Julie, without any remorse or vain regret. Give me your breath, — your fever, — the death that is in your veins. I swear that I will not survive you!"

"Ah me!" cried Julie, who could not repress the passionate cry of her heart, "and I could have been well."

"What did you say?" cried Julien, with an exclamation of horror; "you have taken poison! Tell me, — have you? I will know."

"No, no, I meant nothing!" she said, drawing him forward with a sudden, desperate grasp, that startled him.

Bending over the edge of the water, she had seen the vague reflection of her face and white dress, and had remembered that in an hour she would lie there, stretched out, motionless, — dead. She had sworn it! In expiation of her violated oath, she must die, and as the price of Julien's prosperity. An agonizing fear of death had made her tremble and draw back.

"What are you afraid of?" he asked. "What did

you see down there in the water? What are you thinking about now? And why did you start? Stay, — I know; you mean to die, now, at once, as soon as I am gone away. But you must not. You are my wife. Since you love me wholly, you are mine. I do not know what oath you have taken, nor to what constraint you have been subjected; but I am your lover, your husband, your master; and I disallow all such obligations! I will run away with you; rather, I will carry you away with me, as I have a right to do. I will not allow you to die, and my mother shall live also, and give you her blessing. I have strength enough to protect you both; no matter what hardships are before us, we will meet them. Do not hesitate any longer. If you are not strong enough to walk, I will carry you. Let us go at once, Julie. The time has come when you must acknowledge that no one except me has any rights over your life."

He drew her away in the direction of the pavilion, and as they again approached the water, the struggle between her love and her remorse became so violent that she gave a cry of horror, and clung to him with all her strength.

"I gave my word of honor to leave you," she said, "and I have broken it. And I am bringing your mother to poverty. Can you take away that reproach from me?"

"You are frantic," said Julien. "Since you have known my mother, have you seen her in want? Will any one cut my right arm off to prevent me from working? If so, I will work with my left! Now I understand everything. This was the revenge that M. Antoine threatened. I ought to have guessed sooner why he gave us my father's house! Poor Julie! You have sacrificed yourself for our sake. But the contract is void: I have not given my consent; I have accepted nothing at all; I submitted, but without knowing anything of the circumstances. Do not tremble so. I absolve you from your promise, and woe to him who undertakes to remind you of it. If you hesitate, or are alarmed, I shall think you are regretting your fortune, and have less courage and less love than I."

"Ah! that is what I was so afraid of!" said Julie; "come, let us go! But where? How can I ever find courage to go to your mother, and say, 'I bring you only poverty and sorrow?'"

"Julie, if you doubt my mother, you no longer love us!"

"Let us go, then, and find her. She shall decide for me. Take me away, — save me!"

Exhausted by so many emotions, Julie's strength quite failed; and, as he caught her in his arms, Julien saw that she had fainted. There were no means of restoring her in the pavilion; he carried her back to her house and to her own room, where she had left the door opening upon the garden unfastened, and where he found a light burning. When he had placed Julie upon a sofa, she quickly recovered her consciousness; but, on attempting to rise, she fell back.

"Ah, my friend!" she said, "I cannot move. Am I going to die? Is it too late for you to save me? Hark! There is some one knocking at the street-door, is there not?"

"No," said Julien, who had heard nothing.

He tried to inspire her with a confidence that was beginning to desert his own mind, when they were both of them startled by a violent ringing at the outer door.

"They are coming after me, — to carry me off, perhaps!" cried Julie, bewildered with fear; "they will throw me into a convent! The marchioness, — M. Antoine, — one or both of them! And I cannot move! Carry me away, Julien! Hide me!"

"Wait, wait!" said Julien, who had opened an inner door to listen; "it is Marcel; he is making a great uproar, and calling Camille. Something important has happened, and he wants to warn you. Open the door, and see him."

"I cannot!" she answered in despair, after a vain effort.

"Well, then, I will go," said Julien, resolutely; "he may just as well see me here, for I will not leave the house without you."

He hastened to the outer door, where Marcel was ringing at a furious rate, and, before any of the servants had time to rise and see what was wanted, Julien admitted Marcel and Madam Thierry, brought them in, and closed the doors again.

"Ah, my child," cried Madam Thierry, "I was sure that we should find you here! Victory, my dear Julien, my poor Julie! Ah, I don't know what I am saying; you must get well now; we bring you happiness!"

When Julie learned what had taken place at Sèvres, she revived like a dying plant in a shower of rain. Her nervous excitement passed off in joyful tears. As for Julien, who had been dangerously ill the day before, and utterly exhausted that very morning, he was like a paralytic, cured by a fortunate stroke of lightning, who suddenly begins to walk and leap again.

After an hour of heartfelt happiness and congratulations, Marcel committed Julie to Camille, who undertook to keep the servants from babbling about this nocturnal visit, and carried Madam Thierry home with him to get a little rest. Julien had already made his escape by way of the pavilion. Julie sank into a sweet and deep sleep such as she had not known since her separation from Julien.

Fortunately, M. Antoine, as we have said, had long discontinued his watch upon the hotel d'Estrelle; and fortunately, also, the servants there were devoted and discreet; for if he had heard of the interview between his relatives and Madam d'Estrelle, the consequences might have been disastrous. He had signified his intention of informing the countess in person of her pardon, but he was himself fatigued; his nerves were unstrung; and he was, at the same time, in a great state of self-satisfaction and pride. Accordingly he slept very soundly, and did not get up until a quarter of an hour later than usual. He made up for this, however, as soon as he was on his feet, by flying into a state of extra activity, that threw his whole household into alarm; for M. Antoine was a man energetic in giving orders, prompt in uttering threats, and still more prompt in lifting his cane against

delinquents. In the twinkling of an eye the old hotel de Melcy was opened, swept, and put in complete order. Messengers were sent off in all directions, and at noon a sumptuous dinner was served. His guests, assembled in the great gilded saloon, awaited some mysterious event. Marcel ushered in Madam Thierry and Madam d'Estrelle, whom he had invited in behalf of the host. Julien had also received an invitation, and was present. Julie was welcomed by Madam d'Ancourt, and Madam des Morges, with her daughter and son-in-law. The Duke de Quesnoy had not yet returned, but the abbé de Nivières was on hand, resolved to eat for both of them. The president's wife did not keep them waiting, and, lastly, Marcel was empowered to present to the ladies a number of botanists, both professional men and amateurs, whom M. Antoine was accustomed to assemble around him on great occasions.

"It's enough to make one die of laughter," said the baroness to Julie, drawing her into the recess of a window. "The old gentleman sent me an express at six o'clock in the morning, to invite me to be present at the baptism of a rare plant which is to be called by his name! You can imagine what a temper I was in, at being waked up for such a thing as that! I was furious! But when I had read the postscript, stating that you were to be present at the ceremony, I resolved to come. So, my dearest friend, you are reconciled with your old neighbor? Very well, so much the better. You took my advice, and resigned yourself to your fate. That's right. Mr. Gardener is not particularly agreeable, but five millions! Think of that!"

Julie's other friends took a different view of the matter. They imagined that her creditor had been making a settlement with her in an amicable way, on terms satisfactory to both parties; and that they would be rendering Madam d'Estrelle a service by accepting M. Antoine's invitation. They questioned her, under this supposition, and she did not undeceive them.

As for the *savants*, they were far from considering the baptism of the new plant as a piece of puerile osten-

tatio1. M. Antoine had made several interesting additions to horticulture. He had promoted the acclimation of useful trees, and was justly entitled to have his name recorded in the annals of science. A good dinner, in such cases, is never objectionable; nor is the presence of a number of agreeable ladies absolutely inconsistent with a proper discussion of the grave interests of botany.

When all were assembled, M. Antoine assumed a modest and good-natured manner; always, on the rare occasions when he displayed it, a sure indication that he was certain of having achieved some great victory. He placed the company around a large table with an object of considerable height concealed under a great dome of white paper standing in the centre, and proceeded to draw from his pocket a manuscript of his own inditing, very short, fortunately, but which it was difficult to hear without laughing, since it took unceremoniously the most fearful liberties both with French and Latin. This treatise began with "Ladies and Gentlemen;" it proceeded to discuss the importation and cultivation of the finest known plants of the lily species, and ended thus: "Having been so fortunate (in my opinion) as to obtain, raise, and bring to perfect flowering a specimen, unique in France, of a Liliaceæ, surpassing all those above enumerated in size, perfume and splendor, I call the attention of the honorable company to the individual in question, and invite them to give it a name."

As he ended the reading, M. Antoine, who was armed with a long rod, dexterously lifted the paper-covering from the object before him, and Julien uttered a cry of surprise; for there, fresh and blooming in all its glory, he beheld the *Antonia Thierrii.* He thought, at first, that it was a trick, — a perfect artificial imitation of the original *Antonia;* but as soon as the plant was released from its covering, it exhaled a perfume that reminded him, as well as Julie, of the happy hour of their first meeting. A murmur of sincere admiration ran around the table, and M. Antoine added:

"Learned gentlemen, you will please to know that this plant has put forth two flower-stems; one, a pretty fine

one, in the end of May, which was broken off by accident, and is preserved in my herbarium; the second in August, twice as large and twice as full as the other, which has bloomed, as you see, on the tenth day of the said month."

"Baptize it, baptize it!" cried Madam d'Ancourt. "I would like to be the godmother of this beautiful lily; but I suppose somebody else —"

She paused, and looked over at Julie, good-naturedly, and yet ironically. The *savants*, without noticing her, unanimously proclaimed the name of *Antonia Thierrii*."

"You are very good, gentlemen," said M. Antoine, blushing with pleasure and stammering with emotion, "but I desire to suggest a modification. It is fair enough that the plant should bear my name; but I should like to join to it the first name of a person who — of a lady — in fact, I want to name it *Julie-Antonia-Thierrii*."

"It's rather long," observed Marcel; "but then it's such a tall plant!"

"Very good; hurrah for the *Julie-Antonia-Thierrii!*" answered the scientific gentlemen, with great readiness.

"There! At last! Bravo! It is decided, then!" cried the Baroness d'Ancourt, in so loud a voice as to attract the attention of the whole table. Pointing to Julie, she clasped her plump, white hands, as a sign of an anticipated marriage.

Everybody looked at Julie, whose vivid blush brought back all the splendor of her beauty.

"Pardon me, baroness," said uncle Antoine, with a sly expression; "I deceived you when I applied to you to make an offer of marriage in my behalf to the Countess d'Estrelle. I wanted to see what you would say, and you did not refuse; on the contrary, you advised the young lady to accept me. This decided me to propose to her the person whom I really had in my mind; for I said to myself, 'If an old fellow like me is considered a proper match for the young lady because I have money, my nephew, who is young, and who will inherit a large share of my money, will stand a good chance of being really accepted.' Accordingly, ladies and gentlemen, with the

consent of Madam d'Estrelle, I announce that the various discussions that have taken place between her and myself are terminated, and that peace is concluded by the betrothal of Madam d'Estrelle and my nephew Julien Thierry, whom I do myself the honor to present to you."

"Ah, bah! the young painter!" cried Madam d'Ancourt, irritated, without knowing why, at Julien's good looks and ardent expression.

"A painter?" cried Madam des Morges, greatly shocked; "ah, my dear, it was true then?"

"Yes, my friends, it was true," answered Julie, bravely; "we loved each other before we knew that M. Antoine would rescue us from the poverty which threatened us both."

"I declare that M. Antoine is a great man, and a true philosopher!" cried the abbé de Nivières. "If we could only have dinner!"

"Let us go to dinner, ladies and gentlemen!" replied M. Antoine, offering Julie his arm; "you will consider this marriage a mésalliance for the countess, but each of my nephews will have three millions, — that will polish up the family, and my grand-nephews will be rich enough to purchase titles."

This final argument had its effect upon Julie's friends, who, after a little hesitation, offered her their congratulations. She was obliged to accept the imputation of having sacrificed the dignity of rank for wealth. But what did it matter, after all? Julien knew what she really felt.

Julie, — who was still in mourning for her father-in-law, — went to Sèvres to pass the rest of the summer. Sèvres is an oasis in Normandy, about two leagues from Paris. The orchards have a rural perfume, and the hillsides, thickly dotted with rustic gardens, were just as lovely, and more simple in those days than they are at present. Not that we would undervalue the smiling villas of the Sèvres of to-day, with their splendid shade-trees, their picturesque ravines, and bold precipices descending abruptly to the river. The railroad has not yet robbed

this woody region of all its poetry, and it is very delightful to be able, in a quarter of an hour, to reach grassy footpaths and meadows sloping to the water. From the top of the hill, through the groves of trees grouped in the foreground, you can see Paris, grandly outlined upon the blue horizon. Three steps off, at the bottom of the ravine, you lose sight altogether of the great city; and, escaping even from the glaring white of the villas, can wander about in the real country, — a little old-fashioned, but fresh, serene, and everywhere gay with flowers.

Here Julie recovered her health, which for some time was seriously impaired; and before their marriage, as well as after it, she and Julien were all in all to each other. What society said and thought about their marriage, they did not even wish to know. They had a sufficient number of real friends, and Madam Thierry was the happiest of mothers. It is true that their repose was disturbed by the political troubles, whose approach Julien had foreseen, although he had not anticipated such swift and radical changes. Frank and generous, he made himself extremely useful in the neighborhood by his efforts to relieve the misery of the poor, and to prevent them from indulging in acts of fatal violence. For a long time he preserved great influence over the workmen of the Sèvres factory, and those of the faubourg surrounding the hotel d'Estrelle. On certain occasions he was overborne; but nothing could induce him to pursue a course that his conscience disapproved, and he found himself threatened in his turn, and on the point of being denounced as a suspicious person. The firmness with which he repelled these suspicions, the generosity of his personal sacrifices, and his confidence when in the midst of danger, saved him. Julie was not less brave: her character was transformed; she lost her timidity, and her mind was strengthened and developed by her union with a noble and courageous nature. She suffered great anguish at seeing numbers of her old friends seized by the revolutionary officials, in spite of all that Julie could do to protect them. By wise advice and sensible measures she succeeded in saving several of these victims. Two she concealed in

her own house; but she could not preserve the Baroness d'Ancourt, who betrayed herself by the very excess of her terror, and suffered an extremely severe imprisonment. The unlucky Marchioness d'Estrelle could not contain her fury at having to contribute her savings to the forced loans, and perished on the scaffold. The Duke de Quesnoy emigrated. The abbé de Nivières, more prudent, became a Jacobin.

After the Reign of Terror, the suppression of the monopoly of the royal establishments enabled Julien to accomplish a favorite design: to introduce, practically, the industrial and artistic improvements, which, in his leisure at Sèvres, he had been studying and experimenting on. He gained no profit by doing this, nor did he desire any; in fact, he lost money, but he succeeded in elevating the condition of many poor families. Accordingly he did not become rich, but his wife was happy in seeing him pursue his artistic labors and take pleasure in superintending the education of his children.

Marcel bought a little house at Sèvres, near Julien's, and the two families passed together as many holidays and leisure days as the worthy lawyer, now an advocate, and absorbed in business, could spare from his professional duties. He acquired, by honest industry, a respectable fortune, and Julien learned to manage his property with the prudence which his father had lacked. It was well he did so, for M. Antoine's property was confiscated in the Revolution. The old man, who felt no desire for family ties, continued to live alone; he was as gracious as his nature allowed him to be with his relatives, whose gratitude flattered his pride, but he refused to enter into any relations which could interfere with his own mode of life. Having promised Marcel to abandon his idea of marrying, he kept his word; but another mania seized him. He became interested in politics, and denounced with equal fury whatever party chanced to be uppermost. They were all, according to him, crazy, or blind, or stupid. The king was too weak, the people were too patient, the guillotine was by turns too idle or too voracious. Finally, the swift succession of tragedies

convulsing France seemed to confuse his mind, which had always been unsound rather than evil disposed. He changed his views, and, after advocating the most ultra sans-culotte doctrines, became ridiculously conservative. All these vagaries were quite harmless, for he attempted no intrigues, but contented himself with railing against people and events, on the few occasions when he made his appearance in society. He was, however, denounced by some workman whom he had ill-treated, and came very near losing his head to pay for his unbridled bursts of obscure eloquence.

Julien and Marcel, by persevering efforts, induced him to quit the hotel de Melcy, where he was every day in danger of bringing down a storm upon his head. They kept him in concealment at Sèvres, where he tormented them greatly with his ill-humor, besides compromising them more than once by his imprudence. His property having been placed in sequestration, he only recovered fragments of it; but he supported this great loss with much philosophy. He was like those pilots who curse and swear during the storm, but who are quite calm while trying to save something from the wreck. Julien urged him to take back the property settled upon himself, but he refused to touch it. His garden was not seized; and having ultimately recovered it almost untouched, he resumed his old habits, and became relatively good-humored. He lived in the hotel de Melcy until the year 1802, and was strong and active to the last. One day he was found dead, sitting on a bench in the sun, his watering-pot half full by his side, and on his knee an unintelligible manuscript, — the last lucubration of his exhausted brain. He died without any warning. Only the day before, he had said to Marcel, —

"Don't be alarmed; the millions that you were to have inherited from me, you shall have. Let me only live ten years longer, and I will make a greater fortune than I made before. I have a plan for a constitution that will save France from further disturbance; when that is settled, I will give some attention to my own affairs, and resume my export trade."

GEORGE SAND.

By JUSTIN M'CARTHY.

Reprinted from "The Galaxy" for May, 1870.

WE are all of us probably inclined, now and then, to waste a little time in vaguely speculating on what might have happened if this or that particular event had not given a special direction to the career of some great man or woman. If there had been an inch of difference in the size of Cleopatra's nose; if Hannibal had not lingered at Capua; if Cromwell had carried out his idea of emigration; if Napoleon Bonaparte had taken service under the Turk, — and so on through all the old familiar illustrations dear to the minor essayist and the debating society. I have sometimes felt tempted thus to lose myself in speculating on what might have happened if the woman whom all the world knows as George Sand had been happily married in her youth to the husband of her choice. Would she ever have taken to literature at all? Would she, loving as she does, and as Frenchwomen so rarely do, the changing face of inanimate nature, — the fields, the flowers and the brooks, — have lived a peace-

ful and obscure life in some happy country place, and been content with home, and family, and love, and never thought of fame? Or if, thus happily married, she still had allowed her genius to find an expression in literature, would she have written books with no passionate purpose in them, — books which might have seemed like those of a good Miss Mulock made perfect, — books which Podsnap might have read with approval, and put without a scruple into the hands of that modest young person, his daughter? Certainly one cannot but think that a different kind of early life would have given a quite different complexion to the literary individuality of George Sand.

Bulwer Lytton, in one of his novels, insists that true genius is always quite independent of the individual sufferings or joys of its possessor, and describes some inspired youth in the novel as sitting down, while sorrow is in his heart, and hunger gnawing at his vitals, to throw off a sparkling and gladsome little fairy tale. Now this is undoubtedly true, in general, of any high order of genius; but there are at least some great and striking exceptions. Rousseau and Byron are, in modern days, remarkable illustrations of genius, admittedly of a very high rank, governed and guided almost wholly by the individual fortunes of the men themselves. So, too, must we speak of the genius of George Sand. Not Rousseau, not even Byron, was in this sense more egotistic than the woman who broke the chains of her ill-assorted marriage with a crash that made its echoes heard at last in every civilized country in the world. Just as people are constantly quoting *nous avons changé tout cela* who never read a page of Molière, or *pour encourager les autres* without even being aware that there

is a story of Voltaire's called "Candide," so there have been thousands of passionate protests uttered in America and Europe, for the last twenty years, by people who never saw a volume of George Sand, and yet are only echoing her sentiments and even repeating her words.

In a former number of *The Galaxy*, I expressed casually the opinion that George Sand is probably the most influential writer of our day. I am still, and deliberately, of the same opinion. It must be remembered that very few English or American authors have any wide or deep influence over peoples who do not speak English. Even of the very greatest authors this is true. Compare, for example, the literary dominion of Shakespeare with that of Cervantes. All nations who read Shakespeare read Cervantes: in Stratford-upon-Avon itself Don Quixote is probably as familiar a figure in people's minds as Falstaff; but Shakespeare is little known indeed to the vast majority of readers in the country of Cervantes, in the land of Dante, or in that of Racine and Victor Hugo. In something of the same way we may compare the influence of George Sand with that of even the greatest living authors of England and America. What influence has Charles Dickens or George Eliot outside the range of the English tongue? But George Sand's genius has been felt as a power in every country of the world where people read any manner of books. It has been felt almost as Rousseau's once was felt; it has aroused anger, terror, pity, or wild and rapturous excitement and admiration; it has rallied around it every instinct in man or woman which is revolutionary; it has ranged against it all that is conservative. It is not so much a literary influence as a great disorganising force, riving the rocks of custom,

resolving into their original elements the social combination which tradition and convention would declare to be indissoluble. I am not now speaking merely of the sentiments which George Sand does or did entertain on the subject of marriage. Divested of all startling effects and thrilling dramatic illustrations, these sentiments probably amounted to nothing more dreadful than the belief that an unwedded union between two people who love and are true to each other is less immoral than the legal marriage of two uncongenial creatures who do not love and probably are not true to each other. But the grand, revolutionary idea which George Sand announced was that of the social independence and equality of woman, — the principle that woman is not made for man in any other sense than as man is made for woman. For the first time in the history of the world woman spoke out for herself with a voice as powerful as that of man. For the first time in the history of the world woman spoke out as woman, not as the servant, the satellite, the pupil, the plaything, or the goddess of man.

Now, I intend at present to write of George Sand rather as an individual, or an influence, than as the author of certain works of fiction. Criticism would now be superfluously bestowed on the literary merits and peculiarities of the great woman whose astonishing intellectual activity has never ceased to produce, during the last thirty years, works which take already a classical place in French literature. If any reputation of our day may be looked upon as established, we may thus regard the reputation of George Sand. She is, beyond comparison, the greatest living novelist of France. She has won this position by the most legitimate application of the gifts of an artist. With all her marvellous fecundity,

she has hardly ever given to the world any work which does not seem, at least, to have been the subject of the most elaborate and patient care. The greatest temptation which tries a story-teller is perhaps the temptation to rely on the attractiveness of story-telling, and to pay little or no attention to style. Walter Scott's prose, for example, if regarded as mere prose, is rambling, irregular, and almost worthless. Dickens's prose is as bad a model for imitation as a musical performance which is out of tune. Of course, I need hardly say that attention to style is almost as characteristic of French authors in general, as the lack of it is characteristic of English authors; but, even in France, the prose of George Sand stands out conspicuous for its wonderful expressiveness and force, its almost perfect beauty. Then, of all modern French authors, — I might, perhaps, say of all modern novelists of any country, — George Sand has added to fiction, has annexed from the worlds of reality and of imagination the greatest number of original characters, — of what Emerson calls new organic creations. Moreover, George Sand is, after Rousseau, the one only great French author who has looked directly and lovingly into the face of Nature, and learned the secrets which skies and waters, fields and lanes, can teach to the heart that loves them. Gifts such as these have won her the almost unrivalled place which she holds in living literature; and she has conquered at last even the public opinion which once detested and proscribed her. I could therefore hope to add nothing to what has been already said by criticism in regard to her merits as a novelist. Indeed, I think it probable that the majority of readers in this country know more of George Sand through the interpretation of the critics than through the

pages of her books. And in her case criticism is so nearly unanimous as to her literary merits, that I may safely assume the public in general to have in their minds a just recognition of her position as a novelist. My object is rather to say something about the place which George Sand has taken as a social revolutionist, about the influence she has so long exercised over the world, and about the woman herself. For she is assuredly the greatest champion of woman's rights, in one sense, that the world has ever seen; and she is, on the other hand, the one woman out of all the world who has been most commonly pointed to as the appalling example to scare doubtful and fluttering womanhood back into its sheepfold of submissiveness and conventionality. There is hardly a woman's heart anywhere in the civilized world which has not felt the vibration of George Sand's thrilling voice. Women who never saw one of her books, — nay, who never heard even her *nom de plume*, have been stirred by emotions of doubt or fear, or repining or ambition, which they never would have known but for George Sand, and perhaps but for George Sand's uncongenial marriage. For, indeed, there is not now, and has not been for twenty years, I venture to think, a single "revolutionary" idea, as slow and steady-going people would call it, afloat anywhere in Europe or America, on the subject of woman's relations to man, society, and destiny, which is not due immediately to the influence of George Sand, and to the influence of George Sand's unhappy marriage upon George Sand herself.

The world has of late years grown used to this extraordinary woman, and has lost much of the wonder and terror with which it once regarded her. I can quite remember, — younger people than I can remember, —

the time when all good and proper personages in England regarded the authoress of "Indiana" as a sort of feminine fiend, endowed with a hideous power for the destruction of souls, and an inextinguishable thirst for the slaughter of virtuous beliefs. I fancy a good deal of this sentiment was due to the fearful reports wafted across the seas, that this terrible woman had not merely repudiated the marriage bond, but had actually put off the garments sacred to womanhood. That George Sand appeared in men's clothes was an outrage upon consecrated proprieties far more astonishing than any theoretical onslaught upon old opinions could be. Reformers, indeed, should always, if they are wise in their generation, have a care of the proprieties. Many worthy people can listen with comparative fortitude when sacred and eternal truths are assailed, who are stricken with horror when the ark of propriety is never so lightly touched. George Sand's pantaloons were, therefore, regarded as the most appalling illustration of George Sand's wickedness. I well remember what excitement, scandal, and horror were created in the provincial town where I lived, some twenty years ago, when the editor of a local Panjandrum (to borrow Mr. Trollope's word) insulted the feelings and the morals of his constituents and subscribers by polluting his pages with a translation from one of George Sand's shorter novels. Ah me! the little novel might, so far as morality was concerned, have been written every word by Miss Phelps, or the authoress of the "Heir of Redcliff"; it had not a word, from beginning to end, which might not have been read out to a Sunday-school of girls; the translation was made by a woman of the purest soul, and, in her own locality, of the highest name; and yet how virtue did

shriek out against the publication! The editor persevered in the publishing of the novel, spurred on to boldness by some of his very young and therefore fearless coadjutors, who thought it delightful to confront public opinion, and liked the notion of the stars in their courses fighting against Sisera, and Sisera not being dismayed. That charming, tender, touching little story! I would submit it to-day cheerfully to the verdict of a jury of matrons, confident that it would be declared a fit and proper publication. But at that time it was enough that the story bore the odious name of George Sand; public opinion condemned it, and sent the magazine which ventured to translate it to an early and dishonored grave. I remember reading, about that time, a short notice of George Sand by an English authoress of some talent and culture, in which the Frenchwoman's novels were described as so abominably filthy that even the denizens of the Paris brothels were ashamed to be caught reading them. Now, this declaration was made all in good faith, in the simple good faith of that class of persons who will pass wholesale and emphatic judgment upon works of which they have never read a single page. For I need hardly tell any intelligent person of to-day that, whatever may be said of George Sand's doctrines, she is no more open to the charge of indelicacy than the authoress of "Romola." I cannot, myself, remember any passage in George Sand's novels which can be called indelicate; and, indeed, her severest and most hostile critics are fond of saying, not without a certain justice, that one of the worst characteristics of her works is the delicacy and beauty of her style, which thus commends to pure and innocent minds certain doctrines that, broadly stated, would repel and shock them. Were I

one of George Sand's inveterate opponents, this, or something like it, is the ground I would take up. I would say: "The welfare of the human family demands that a marriage, legally made, shall never be questioned or undone. Marriage is not a union depending on love or congeniality, or any such condition. It is just as sacred when made for money, or for ambition, or for lust of the flesh, or for any other purpose, however ignoble and base, as when contracted in the spirit of the purest mutual love. Here is a woman of great power and daring genius, who says that the essential condition of marriage is love and natural fitness; that a legal union of man and woman without this is no marriage at all, but a detestable and disgusting sin. Now, the more delicately, modestly, plausibly she can put this revolutionary and pernicious doctrine, the more dangerous she becomes, and the more earnestly we ought to denounce her." This was, in fact, what a great many persons did say; and the protest was at least consistent and logical.

But horror is an emotion which cannot long live on the old fuel, and even the world of English Philistinism soon ceased to regard George Sand as a mere monster. Any one now taking up "Indiana," for example, would perhaps find it not quite easy to understand how the book produced such an effect. Our novel-writing women of to-day commonly feed us on more fiery stuff than this. Not to speak of such accomplished artists in impurity as the lady who calls herself Ouida, and one or two others of the same school, we have young women, only just promoted from pantalettes, who can throw you off such glowing chapters of passion and young desire as would make the rhapsodies of "Indiana" seem very feeble milk-and-water brewage by comparison. Indeed, except for some

of the descriptions in the opening chapters, I fail to see any extraordinary merit in "Indiana"; and toward the end it seems to me to grow verbose, weak, and tiresome. "Leone Leoni" opens with one of the finest dramatic outbursts of emotion known to the literature of modern fiction; but it soon wanders away into discursive weakness, and only just toward the close brightens up into a burst of lurid splendor. It is not those which I may call the questionable novels of George Sand, — the novels which were believed to illustrate in naked and appalling simplicity her doctrines and her life, — that will bear up her fame through succeeding generations. If every one of the novels which thus in their time drew down the thunderers of Society's denunciation were to be swept into the wallet wherein Time, according to Shakespeare, carries scraps for oblivion, George Sand would still remain where she now is, — at the head of the French fiction of her day. It is true, as Goethe says, that "miracle-working pictures are rarely works of art." The books which make the hair of the respectable public stand on end are not often the works by which the fame of the author is preserved for posterity.

It is a curious fact that, at the early time to which I have been alluding, little or nothing was known in England (or, I presume, in America) of the real life of Aurora Amandine Dupin, who had been pleased to call herself George Sand. People knew, or had heard, that she had separated from her husband, that she had written novels which depreciated the sanctity of legal marriage, and that she sometimes wore male costume in the streets. This was enough. In England, at least, we were ready to infer any enormity regarding a woman who was unsound on the legal marriage question, and

who did not wear petticoats. What would have been said had people then commonly known half the stories which were circulated in Paris, — half the extravagances into which a passionate soul, and the stimulus of sudden emancipation from restraint, had hurried the authoress of "Indiana" and "Lucrezia Floriani"? For it must be owned that the life of that woman was, in its earlier years, a strange and wild phenomenon, hardly to be comprehended, perhaps, by American or English natures. I have heard George Sand bitterly arraigned even by persons who protested that they were at one with her as regards the early sentiments which used to excite such odium. I have heard her described by such as a sort of Lamia of literature and passion, — a creature who could seize some noble, generous, youthful heart, drain it of its love, its aspirations, its profoundest emotions, and then fling it, squeezed and lifeless, away. I have heard it declared that George Sand made "copy" of the fierce and passionate loves which she knew so well how to awaken and to foster; that she distilled the life-blood of youth to obtain the mixture out of which she derived her inspiration. The charge so commonly (I think unjustly) made against Goethe, that he played with the girlish love of Bettina and of others in order to obtain a subject for literary dissection, is vehemently and deliberately urged in an aggravated form, — in many aggravated forms, — against George Sand. Where, such accusers ask, is that young poet, endowed with a lyrical genius rare indeed in the France of later days, — that young poet whose imagination was at once so daring and so subtle, — who might have been Béranger and Heine in one, and have risen to an atmosphere in which neither Béranger nor Heine ever floated? Where is he, and what evil influence was it which

sapped the strength of his nature, corrupted his genius, and prepared for him a premature and shameful grave? Where is that young musician, whose pure, tender, and lofty strains sound sweetly and sadly in the ears, as the very hymn and music of the Might-Have-Been, — where is he now, and what was the seductive power which made a plaything of him and then flung him away? Here and there some man of stronger mould is pointed out as one who was at the first conquered, and then deceived and trifled with, but who ordered his stout heart to bear, and rose superior to the hour, and lived to retrieve his nature and make himself a name of respect; but the others, of more sensitive and perhaps finer organizations, are only the more to be pitied because they were so terribly in earnest. Seldom, even in the literary history of modern France, has there been a more strange and shocking episode than the publication by George Sand of the little book called "Elle et Lui," and the rejoinder to it by Paul de Musset, called "Lui et Elle." I can hardly be accused of straying into the regions of private scandal when I speak of two books which had a wide circulation, are still being read, and may be had, I presume, in any New York book-store where French literature is sold. The former of the two books, "She and He," was a story, or something which purported to be a story, by George Sand, telling of two ill-assorted beings whom fate had thrown together for awhile, and of whom the woman was all tenderness, love, patience, the man all egotism, selfishness, sensuousness, and eccentricity. The point of the whole business was to show how sublimely the woman suffered, and how wantonly the man flung happiness away. Had it been merely a piece of fiction, it must have been regarded by any

healthy mind as a morbid, unwholesome, disagreeable production, — a sin of the highest æsthetic kind against true art, which must always, even in its pathos and its tragedy, leave on the mind exalted and delightful impressions. But every one in Paris at once hailed the story as a chapter of autobiography, as the author's vindication of one episode in her own career, — a vindication at the expense of a man who had gone down, ruined and lost, to an early grave. Therefore the brother of the dead man flung into literature a little book called "He and She," in which a story, substantially the same in its outlines, is so told as exactly to reverse the conditions under which the verdict of public opinion was sought. Very curious indeed was the manner in which the same substance of facts was made to present the two principal figures with complexions and characters so strangely altered. In the woman's book the woman was made the patient, loving, suffering victim; in the man's reply this same woman was depicted as the most utterly selfish and depraved creature the human imagination could conceive. Even if one had no other means whatever of forming an estimate of the character of George Sand, it would be hardly possible to accept as her likeness the hideous picture sketched by Paul de Musset. No woman, I am glad to believe, ever existed in real life so utterly selfish, base, and wicked as his bitter pen has drawn. I must say that the thing is very cleverly done. The picture is at least consistent with itself. As a character in romance it might be pronounced original, bold, brilliant, and, in an artistic sense, quite natural. There is something thoroughly French in the easy and delicate force of the final touch with which de Musset dismisses his hideous subject. Having sketched this woman in tints that seem to flame

across the eyes of the reader, — having described with wonderful realism and power her affectation, her deceit, her reckless caprices, her base and cruel coquetries, her devouring wantonness, her soul-destroying arts, her unutterable selfishness and egotism, — having, to use a vulgar phrase, "turned her inside out," and told her story backwards, — the author calmly explains that the hero of the narrative in his dying hour called his brother to his bedside, and enjoined him, if occasion should ever arise, if the partner of his sin should ever calumniate him in his grave, to vindicate his memory, and avenge the treason practised upon him. "Of course," adds the narrator, "the brother made the promise, — and I have since heard that he has kept his word." I can hardly hope to convey to the reader any adequate idea of the effect produced on the mind by these few simple words of compressed, whispered hatred and triumph, closing a philippic, or a revelation, or a libel of such extraordinary bitterness and ferocity. The whole episode is, I believe and earnestly hope, without precedent or imitation in literary controversy. Never, that I know of, has a living woman been publicly exhibited to the world in a portraiture so hideous as that which Paul de Musset drew of George Sand. Never, that I know of, has any woman gone so near to deserving and justifying such a measure of retaliation.

For if it be assumed, — and I suppose it never has been disputed, — that in writing "Elle et Lui" George Sand meant to describe herself and Alfred de Musset, it is hard to conceive of any sin against taste and feeling, — against art and morals, — more flagrant than such a publication. The practice, to which French writers are so much addicted, of making "copy" of the private lives, charac-

ters, and relationships of themselves and their friends, seems to me in all cases utterly detestable. Lamartine's sins of this kind were grievous and glaring; but were they red as scarlet, they would seem whiter than snow when compared with the lurid monstrosity of George Sand's assault on the memory of the dead poet who was once her favorite. The whole affair, indeed, is so unlike anything which could occur in America or in England, that we can hardly find any canons by which to try it, or any standard of punishment by which to regulate its censure. I allude to it now because it is the only substantial evidence I know of which does fairly seem to justify the worst of the accusations brought against George Sand; and I do not think it right, when writing for grown men and women, who are supposed to have sense and judgment, to affect not to know that such accusations are made, or to pretend to think that it would be proper not to allude to them. They have been put forward, replied to, urged again, made the theme of all manner of controversy in scores of French and in some English publications. Pray let it be distinctly understood that I am not entering into any criticism of the morality of any part of George Sand's private life. With that we have nothing here to do. I am now dealing with the question, fairly belonging to public controversy, whether the great artist did not deliberately deal with human hearts as the painter of old is said to have done with a purchased slave, — inflicting torture in order the better to learn how to depict the struggles and contortions of mortal agony. In answer to such a question I can only point to "Lucrezia Floriani" and to "Elle et Lui," and say that unless the universal opinion of qualified critics be wrong, these books, and others too, owe their piquancy and their dramatic

force to the anatomization of dead passions and discarded lovers. We have all laughed over the pedantic surgeon in Molière's "Malade Imaginaire," who invites his *fiancée*, as a delightful treat, to see him dissect the body of a woman. I am afraid that George Sand did sometimes invite an admiring public to an exhibition yet more ghastly and revolting, — the dissection of the heart of a dead lover.

But, in truth, we shall never judge George Sand and her writings at all, if we insist on criticising them from any point of view set up by the proprieties or even the moralities of Old England or New England. When the passionate young woman, — in whose veins ran the wild blood of Marshal Saxe, — found herself surrendered by legality and prescription to a marriage bond against which her soul revolted, society seemed for her to have resolved itself into its original elements. Its conventionalities and traditions contained nothing which she held herself bound to respect. The world was not her friend, nor the world's law. By one great decisive step she sundered herself forever from the bonds of what we call "society." She had shaken the dust of convention from her feet; the world was all before her where to choose. No creature on earth is so absolutely free as the Frenchwoman who has broken with society. There, then, stood this daring young woman, on the threshold of a new, fresh, and illimitable world; a young woman gifted with genius such as our later years have rarely seen, and blessed or cursed with a nature so strangely uniting the most characteristic qualities of man and woman, as to be in itself quite unparalleled and unique. Just think of it, — try to think of it! Society and the world had no longer any laws which she recognized. Nothing was

sacred; nothing was settled. She had to evolve from her own heart and brain her own law of life. What wonder if she made some sad mistakes? Nay, is it not rather a theme for wonder and admiration that she did somehow come right at last? I know of no one who seems to me to have been open at once to the temptations of woman's nature and man's nature, except this George Sand. Her soul, — her brain, — her style may be described, from one point of view, as exuberantly and splendidly feminine; yet no other woman has ever shown the same power of understanding, and entering into the nature of a man. If Balzac is the only man who has ever thoroughly mastered the mysteries of a woman's heart, George Sand is the only woman, so far as I know, who has ever shown that she could feel as a man can feel. I have read stray passages in her novels which I would confidently submit to the criticism of any intelligent men unacquainted with the text, convinced that they would declare that only a man could have thus analyzed the emotions of manhood. I have in my mind, just now especially, a passage in the novel "Piccinino" which, were the authorship unknown, would, I am satisfied, secure the decision of a jury of literary experts that the author must be a man. Now this gift of entire appreciation of the feelings of a different sex or race is, I take it, one of the rarest and highest dramatic qualities. Especially is it difficult for a woman, as our social life goes, to enter into the feelings of a man. While men and women alike admit the accuracy of certain pictures of women drawn by such artists as Cervantes, Molière, Balzac, and Thackeray, there are few women, — indeed, perhaps there are no women but one, — by whom a man has been so painted as to challenge and compel the recognition and acknowledgment of men. In

"The Galaxy," some months ago, I wrote of a great Englishwoman, the authoress of "Romola," and I expressed my conviction that on the whole she is entitled to higher rank, as a novelist, than even the authoress of "Consuelo." Many, very many men and women, for whose judgment I have the highest respect, differed from me in this opinion. I still hold it, nevertheless; but I freely admit that George Eliot has nothing like the dramatic insight which enables George Sand to enter into the feelings and experiences of a man. I go so far as to say that, having some knowledge of the literature of fiction in most countries, I am not aware of the existence of any woman but this one, who could draw a real, living, struggling, passion-tortured man. All other novelists of George Sand's sex, — even including Charlotte Brontë, — draw only what I may call "women's men." If ever the two natures could be united in one form, — if ever a single human being could have the soul of man and the soul of woman at once, — George Sand might be described as that physical and psychological phenomenon. Now the point to which I wish to direct attention, is the peculiarity of the temptation to which a nature such as this was necessarily exposed at every turn when, free of all restraint and a rebel against all conventionality, it confronted the world and the world's law, and stood up, itself alone, against the domination of custom and the majesty of tradition. I claim, then, that when we have taken all these considerations into account, we are bound to admit that Aurora Dudevant deserves the generous recognition of the world for the use which she made of her splendid gifts. Her influence on French literature has been, on the whole, a purifying and strengthening power. The cynicism, the recklessness, the wanton, licentious disre-

gard of any manner of principle, the debasing parade of disbelief in any higher purpose or nobler restraint, which are the shame and curse of modern French fiction, find no sanction in the pages of George Sand. I remember no passage in her works which gives the slightest encouragement to the "nothing new, and nothing true, and it don't signify" code of ethics which has been so much in fashion of late years. I find nothing in George Sand which does not do homage to the existence of a principle and a law in everything. This daring woman, who broke with society so early and so conspicuously, has always insisted, through every illustration, character, and catastrophe in her books, that the one only reality, the one only thing that can endure, is the rule of right and of virtue. Nor has she ever, that I can recollect, fallen into the enfeebling and sentimental theory so commonly expressed in the works of Victor Hugo, that the vague abstraction society is always to bear the blame of the faults committed by the individual man or woman. Of all persons in the world, Aurora Dudevant might be supposed most likely to adopt this easy and complacent theory as her guiding principle. She had every excuse, every reason for endeavoring to preach up the doctrine that our errors are society's and our virtues our own. But I am not aware that she ever taught any lesson save the lesson that men and women must endeavor to be heroes and heroines for themselves, heroes and heroines though all the world else were craven, and weak, and selfish, and unprincipled. Even that wretched and lamentable "Elle et Lui" affair, utterly inexcusable as it is when we read between the lines its secret history, has, at least, the merit of being an earnest and powerful protest against the egotistical and debasing indulgence of moral weaknesses and eccentricities

which mean and vulgar minds are apt to regard as the privilege of genius. "Stand upon your own ground; be your own ruler; look to yourself, not to your stars, for your failure or success; always make your standard a lofty ideal, and try persistently to reach it, though all the temptations of earth, and all the power of darkness strive against you" — this, and nothing else, if I have read her books rightly, is the moral taught by George Sand. She may be wrong in her principle sometimes, but, at least, she always has a principle. She has a profound and generous faith in the possibilities of human nature; in the capacity of man's heart for purity, self-sacrifice, and self-redemption. Indeed, so far is she from holding counsel with wilful weakness or sin, that I think she sometimes falls into the noble error of painting her heroes as too glorious in their triumph over temptation, in their subjugation of every passion and interest to the dictates of duty and of honor. Take, for instance, that extraordinary book which has just been given to the American public in Miss Virginia Vaughan's excellent translation, "Mauprat." If I understand that magnificent romance at all, its purport is to prove that no human nature is ever plunged into temptation beyond its own strength to resist, provided that it really wills resistance; that no character is irretrievable, no error inexpiable, where there is sincere resolve to expiate, and longing desire to retrieve. Take, again, that exquisite little story, "La Dernière Aldini": I do not know where one could find a finer illustration of the entire sacrifice of man's natural impulse, passion, interest, to what might almost be called an abstract idea of honor and principle. I have never read this little story without wondering how many men one ever has known who, placed in the same situation as that of Nello, the

hero, would have done the same thing; and yet so simply and naturally are the characters wrought out, and the incidents described, that the idea of pompous, dramatic self-sacrifice never enters the mind of the reader, and it seems to him that Nello could not do otherwise than as he is doing. I speak of these two stories particularly, because in both of them there is a good deal of the world and the flesh; that is, both are stories of strong human passion and temptation. Many of George Sand's novels, the shorter ones especially, are as absolutely pure in moral tone, as entirely free from even a taint or suggestion of impurity, as they are perfect in style. Now, if we cannot help knowing that much of this great woman's life was far from being irreproachable, are we not bound to give her all the fuller credit, because her genius, at least, kept so far the whiteness of its soul? Revolutions are not to be made with rose-water; you cannot have omelettes without breaking of eggs. I am afraid that great social revolutionists are not often creatures of the most pure and perfect nature. It is not to patient Griselda you must look for any protest against even the uttermost tyranny of social conventions. One thing I think may, at least, be admitted as part of George Sand's vindication, — that the marriage system in France is the most debased and debasing institution existing in civilized society, now that the buying and selling of slaves has ceased to be a tolerated system. I hold that the most ardent advocates of the irrevocable endurance of the marriage bond are bound, by their very principles, to admit that, in protesting against the so-called marriage system of France, George Sand stood on the side of purity and right. Assuredly, she often went into extravagances in the other direction. It seems to be the fate of all French reformers to rush sud-

denly to extremes; and we must remember that George Sand was not a Bristol Quakeress, or a Boston transcendentalist, but a passionate Frenchwoman, the descendant of one of the maddest votaries of love and war who ever stormed across the stage of European history.

Regarding George Sand, then, as an influence in literature, and on society, I claim for her at least four great and special merits: First, she insisted on calling public attention to the true principle of marriage; that is to say, she put the question as it had not been put before. Of course, the fundamental principle she would have enforced is always being urged more or less feebly, more or less sincerely; but she made it her own question, and illuminated it by the fervid, fierce rays of her genius and her passion. Secondly, her works are an exposition of the tremendous reality of the feelings which people who call themselves practical are apt to regard with indifference or contempt as mere sentiments. In the long run, the passions decide the life-question one way or the other. They are the tide which, as you know or do not know how to use it, will either turn your mill and float your boat, or drown your fields and sweep away your dwellings. Life and society receive no impulse and no direction from the influences out of which the novels of Dickens, or even of Thackeray, are made up. These are but pleasant or tender toying with the playthings and puppets of existence. George Sand constrains us to look at the realities through the medium of her fiction. Thirdly, she insists that man can and shall make his own career; not whine to the stars, and rail out against the powers above, when he has weakly or wantonly marred his own destiny. Fourthly, —and this ought not to be considered her least service to the literature of her country, — she has tried to teach

people to look at Nature with their own eyes, and to invite the true love of her to flow into their hearts. The great service which Ruskin, with all his eccentricities and extravagances, has rendered to English-speaking peoples by teaching them to use their own eyes when they look at clouds, and waters, and grasses, and hills, George Sand has rendered to France.

I hold that these are virtues and services which ought to outweigh even very grave personal and artistic errors. We often hear that this or that great poet or romancist has painted men as they are; this other as they ought to be. I think George Sand paints men as they are, and also not merely as they ought to be, but as they can be. The sum of the lesson taught by her books is one of confidence in man's possibilities, and hope in his steady progress. At the same time she is entirely practical in her faith and her aspirations. She never expects that the trees are to grow up into the heavens, that men and women are to be other than men and women. She does not want them to be other; she finds the springs and sources of their social regeneration in the fact that they are just what they are, to begin with. I am afraid some of the ladies who seem to base their scheme of woman's emancipation and equality on the assumption that, by some development of time or process of schooling, a condition of things is to be brought about where difference of sex is no longer to be a disturbing power, will find small comfort or encouragement in the writings of George Sand. She deals in realities altogether; the realities of life, even when they are such as to shallow minds may seem mere sentiments and ecstacies; the realities of society, of suffering, of passion, of inanimate nature. There is in her nothing

unmeaning, nothing untrue; there is in her much error, doubtless, but no sham.

I believe George Sand is growing into a quiet and beautiful old age. After a life of storm and stress, a life which, metaphorically at least, was "worn by war and passion," her closing years seem likely to be gilded with the calm glory of an autumnal sunset. One is glad to think of her thus happy and peaceful, accepting so tranquilly the reality of old age, still laboring with her unwearied pen, still delighting in books, and landscapes, and friends, and work. The world can well afford to forget as soon as possible her literary and other errors. Of the vast mass of romances, stories, plays, sketches, criticisms, pamphlets, political articles, even, it is said, ministerial manifestoes of republican days, which she poured out, only a few comparatively will perhaps be always treasured by posterity; but these will be enough to secure her a classic place. And she will not be remembered by her writings alone. Hers is probably the most powerful individuality displayed by any modern Frenchwoman. The influence of Madame Roland was but a glittering unreality, that of Madame de Staël only a boudoir and coterie success, when compared with the power exercised over literature, human feeling, and social law, by the energy, the courage, the genius, even the very errors and extravagances of George Sand.

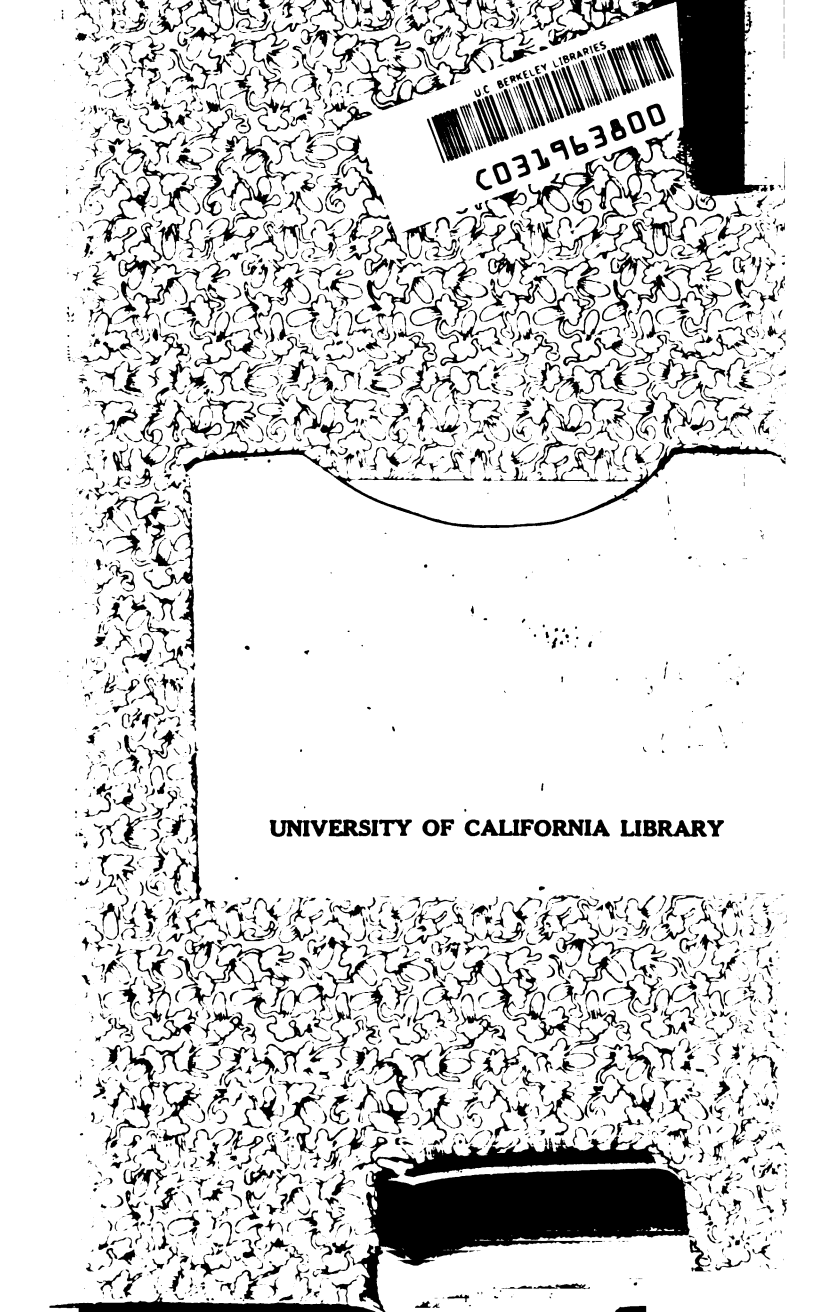
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